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DRAMATIC MISCELLANIES:

CONSISTING OF

CRITICAL OBSERVATIONS

ON SEVERAL

PLAYS OF SHAKSPEARE:

WITH A

REVIEW OF HIS PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS, AND
THOSE OF VARIOUS EMINENT WRITERS,

AS REPRESENTED

BY MR. GARRICK,
AND OTHER CELEBRATED COMEDIANS.

WITH

ANECDOTES OF DRAMATIC POETS, ACTORS, &c.

BY THOMAS DAVIES,

AUTHOR OF MEMOIRS OF THE LIFE OF

DAVID GARRICK, Esq.
IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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D R A M A T I C
M I S C E L L A N I E S.

Hamlet.

C H A P T E R XXXV.

Obligations of the public to Mr. Stephens and Mr. Malone.—The time, when Hamlet was first acted, not certainly authenticated.—Shakspeare's frequent additions to those plays he valued.—Hamlet, first play of Shakspeare acted at the duke's theatre.—Popularity of Hamlet.—Francisco and Boheme.—Voltaire's disingenuity.—Rivals of the watch.—The word stomach explained.—A little more than kin, and less than kind.—Too much i'th' sun.—A common thought notly expressed.—Dr. Johnson supposed to be mistaken.—Parallel passage, in the Supplicants of Æschylus, to the advice of Laertes.—Kings of Denmark lovers of Rhenish.—Their intoxication.—Masque of the Queen of Sheba.—A whole Court inebriated.—Dram of base.—A passage rectified with a small alteration.—Reverend Mr. Robertson.—Complete steel.—Beetles o'er his base.—Confin'd to fast in fires.—Lucian's Dialogue of Menippus, &c.—Juice of cursed Hebenon.—Galen, Dioscorides, Celsus, &c.—Distraffed globe.—The first act of Hamlet unequalled.—Ghost of Darius, from Æschylus.—A good lesson for princes.—Dr. Potter and Mr. Rumney.—Ghost of Laius.—Of Ninus, in Semiramis.—La

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Clairon, Le Kin, and the property-man.—Discussion of the manner of addressing the Ghost by Hamlet.—Taylor, Sir W. Davenant, Betterton.—Macklin and Henderson.—Colley Cibber and Mr. Addison.—Booth and Wilks.—Booth's superiority in the Ghost.

ALL lovers of Shakspeare are indebted to Mr. Steevens and Mr. Malone, for their diligent researches into every thing which related to this great man and his family ; and more especially to the immortal part of him, his writings. The chronological series of his plays, with large and instructive notes, is a very curious and interesting composition, in which Mr. Malone has endeavoured to authenticate the order and fix the dates of all the plays written by our great poet.

After a most strict examination into the time when Hamlet made its first appearance, Mr. Malone is obliged to leave that circumstance rather undetermined, though he has, with some degree of probability, placed it to the year 1596. In my opinion, the first sketch of it was brought on the stage more early. In all his pieces, for which he entertained a predilection, it is granted he made such additions as he thought would advance the credit of the play, and make it more palatable to an audience ; and, as no one of his tragedies by consent of history and tradition, was more relished, by the inhabitants of this metropolis, than Hamlet, we have no reason to doubt, that he, from time to time, threw in such materials as would improve the original stock : so that the first and last Hamlet might be, in some respect, as dissimilar, as Pope's Rape of the Lock, with the sylphs, and the same poem without them.

The first play of Shakspeare, acted after the Restoration at the duke's theatre, if we may depend on the Narrative of Downs, was Hamlet; the principal character was acted by Betterton, who often exhibited himself in this part, at the opening of the theatre, as an infallible lure to draw company. Wilks at Drury-lane, and Ryan at Lincoln's-inn fields, frequently chose this favourite part to open the winter season at these rival playhouses. From the first representation of Hamlet, to the present day, we may reasonably conclude, that no dramatic piece whatever has laid hold on the public affection so strongly and been acted so frequently.

Act I. Scene I.

F R A N C I S C O.

For this relief much thanks: 'tis bitter cold,
And I am sick at heart.

The right expression of a simple thought is sometimes of considerable and unexpected consequence to the speaker. Mr. Boheme was about the year 1718, accidentally seen by Rich, when playing with some itinerants at Stratford le Bow, who soon distinguished him from his companions, and hired him, at a small income, to act at his theatre in Lincoln's-inn fields. I have been told, that this actor was, on his first trial, cast into the trifling part of Francisco. His unaffected, yet feeling, manner, of pronouncing this short speech, roused the auditors to an attention of his merit. His salary was immediately increased by the manager, and he proved afterwards a great ornament of the stage.

I D E M.

Not a mouse stirring.

Voltaire, who, in examining the merit of our author's plays, disdains the use of no unfair method

to depreciate them, has ridiculed this passage of Hamlet, as if the mention of a mouse were beneath the dignity of tragedy. But could there be a properer mode of describing the solitariness which reigned in the place, than by saying that every thing was so still, that the soft tread of a small reptile had not been heard? The insignificance of an object does by no means lessen the general idea. Have not the most celebrated antient dramatic writers admitted thoughts as low, and words more gross and offensive, into their best tragedies? How does the nice ear of a Frenchman relish the filthy plasters and nasty rags which Philoctetes applies to his sores? Yet Sophocles understood nature, and the laws of decorum, I presume, as perfectly as Voltaire. Tiresias's description, in Antigone, of the ordure and filth of the ill-omened birds who had fed on the carcass of Polynices, would raise a nausea in the stomach of a delicate French critic! Men of solid judgment and true taste despise such refinement.

BERNARDO.

If you do meet Horatio and Marcellus,
The *rivals* of my watch——

Dr. Warburton will have *rivals* to mean *partners*. Blunt derives the word from *rivus*, or *rivilis*, or from *men fetching water from a neighbouring river, or rivulet*. Hanmer says, *rivals* are those men who watch upon an adjoining ground: by this interpretation, they, who are to succeed Bernardo, must have indeed gone through very hard service, as they were called from one act of duty to another. But, without a learned explanation, it is plain, by *rivals*, that Shakspeare means, those men who were appointed next to relieve soldiers on the watch.

watch. They were indeed so far *rivals*, as they were successors to others, and waiting to occupy their places.

H O R A T I O.

Some strange eruption to the state.

‘ Some political distemper, which will break out in dangerous consequences.’

I D E M.

That hath a *stomach* in it.

Stomach, says Dr. Johnson, in the times of Shakespeare, was used for *constancy* and *resolution*. The original, *stomachus*, has various significations besides the *stomach*. — In Cicero, it means, in one place *choler*; in another, *humour*, or *fancy*. *Ille mibi risum magis quam stomachum.* *Ludi apparatissimi, sed non tui stomachi.* In Shakespeare, *stomach* generally stands for excessive pride, or insolence of power. Queen Katharine, speaking of Cardinal Wolsey, ‘ He was of an unbounded *stomach*.’ Henry VIII. act IV. I think, in this place, ‘ hath a *stomach* in it’ means, ‘ the business is of an alarming nature.’

M A R C E L L U S.

Some say, that, ever 'gainst that season comes
In which our Saviour's birth is celebrated,
The bird of dawning singeth all night long.
And then, they say, no spirit dare stir abroad;
The nights are wholesome; then no planets strike,
No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm;
So hallow'd, and so gracious, is the time!

These lines, which are omitted in the representation of the play, are remarkably beautiful; they are invigorated by fancy and harmonized by versification.

‘ The

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The word *spirit*, in the 4th line, should be, I think, contracted to *sprite*, or *sp'rit*; both are, I believe, familiar to our old dramatists.

‘No fairy *takes*,’ in the 6th line, is explained by Lear’s curse on Goneril, in the second act of that play:

————— Strike her young bones,
Ye taking airs, with lameness!

Scene II.

The King, Queen, Hamlet, &c.

H A M L E T.

A little more than kin, and less than kind.

Hanmer supposes that this might formerly have been a proverbial expression; but vulgar sayings or proverbs are gathered from such things as frequently happen, and not from circumstances and events which are unusual.

The meaning of this line, however variously understood by different commentators, seems to be very obvious.

‘As I am the rightful heir to the crown, I am more than your relation; I am your king. As you have deprived me of my birthright, and committed the crime of incest with my mother, it is impossible I can have any affection or kindness for you.’

It should be observed, that, whenever Hamlet speaks of the King, it is in terms of reproach and of the utmost contempt; nor does he ever seem to pay him the least respect, in his behaviour or address, when he speaks to him.

I D E M.

Not so, my lord; I am too much i’th’ sun.

‘I am

' I am so far from being obscured with shadows,
that I am scorched with the rays of your sunshine.'

Q U E E N.

— — — — — All that live must die,
Passing through nature to eternity.

The thought is common ; but the expression is
awfully striking and extremely beautiful.

K I N G.

No jocund health, that Denmark drinks to-day,
But the loud cannon to the clouds shall tell.

I cannot think, with Dr. Johnson, that these lines particularly mark the king's fondness for drinking. Drunkenness was the national vice, as Hamlet himself afterwards confesses.

This seems to have been pointed out, by the author, as the King's first appearance in public after his usurping the crown and marrying his sister ; and is therefore celebrated as a gala-day. He therefore seizes an opportunity to compliment Hamlet's concession, as he would fain term it, in his own favour, by firing off the cannon to his honour at every toast.

I D E M.

— — — — — To post.
With such dexterity to incestuous sheets.

Dexterity for rapidity.

I D E M.

Would I had met my dearest foe, in heaven,
Ere I had seen that day, Horatio !

This strongly marks the resentful, not to say implacable disposition, of Hamlet ; and is of a piece with

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with his not putting his uncle to death, in the third act of the play, when he was at his devotion, lest, in that instant, he should send his soul to heaven.

I D E M.

My father! —— Me thinks I see my father!

H O R A T I O.

Where, my lord?

Horatio, by that question, imagined that Hamlet saw the shade of his father.

Scene III.

Laertes and Ophelia.

L A E R T E S.

The fairest maid is prodigal enough
If she unmasks her beauty to the moon.
Virtue itself 'scapes not calumnious strokes;
The canker galls the infants of the spring..

In the advice of Danaüs to his daughters, in the Suppliants of Æschylus, to guard against the inticements of youth, there are some lines, which bear a strong resemblance of Laertes's instructions to Ophelia.

————— I see your blooming age
Inforcing soft desire. I know how hard
To guard the lovely flowers that grace that season.
The queen of love proclaims their opening bloom :
Ah ! would she suffer it to remain uncropt!
For, on the delicate tints that kindling glow
On beauty's vermeil cheek, each roving youth
With melting wishes darts the am'rous glance.

Potter's Æschylus.

P O L O N I U S.

Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,
But not express'd in fancy.

That

That is, not fantastic, tawdry, or foppish.

I D E M.

To thy own self be true,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.

This is agreeable to one of the golden rules of Pythagoras.

— Πάντων δε μαλιστ' αισχυνεο σαυτούς.
Sed maxime omnium verere teipsum.

I D E M.

As he drains his draughts of *Rhenish* down,

The kings of Denmark have been constant drinkers of *Rhenish* wine. It was the custom at Copenhagen, when Lord Molesworth was our ambassador to that court, in 1692, for the king to have his beaker of *Rhenish*.* Drinking to excess was the vice of the court and nation; and our author must have known, that, in his time, the King of Denmark, brother-in-law to James I. had no aversion to large draughts of wine. Sir John Harrington, in a letter to a friend, describes a masque, called the Queen of Sheba, at which the two kings and the whole court were present, and all of them most shamefully intoxicated. The Queen of Sheba and his Danish majesty paid and received the same compliment as Don Quixote and Sancho did to each other, from the operation of a precious balsam in Sancho's stomach, when the latter, after a bloody battle with the sheep and their herdsmen, was examining the don's mouth, and counting the grinders he had lost in the conflict. The two drunken majesties of Great-Britain and Denmark, says Harrington, were so far inebriated, that the gentlemen of the bedchamber

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were

* The kettle-drums and trumpets, which are ranged in a large place before the palace, proclaim aloud the very minute when the king sits down to table. Molesworth.

obliged to carry them on their shoulders to their beds. Perhaps our author's knowledge of this Bacchanalian bout was one reason why he insists so much on the drunkenness of the royal Dane.

HAMLET.

The dram of base

Doth all the noble substance of worth out,
To his own scandal.

The admirable reflections of Hamlet, upon national vice and personal blemish, on account of the length of the play, are entirely curtailed. Our author, as excellent in morals as he was happy in character and passion, makes a just observation on the danger of indulging one favourite passion, vice, or folly, which, he says, taints the whole man, and tarnishes all his virtues, however great and eminent. This is, I believe, that plague of the heart which Solomon calls upon his people to pray against in his dedication of the temple. The apostle James, in his Epistle, hath a sentiment very similar to that of Shakspere : *For, whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.*

The text, as it stands in the quoted passage, —

That dram of base

Doth all the noble substance of worth out,
To his own scandal, —

is given up, by some of the commentators, as very difficult and obscure, notwithstanding the explanation of Mr. Steevens, it still seems harsh, if not unintelligible.

The very trifling alteration, of adding a letter to one word, and the changing two letters for one in another, will, I believe, restore to us the original reading.

— The

— The dram of base
Doth all the noble substance oft work out,
To his own scandal.

‘ As a small quantity of certain medicines, by its potent operation, deprives the body of its strength and firmness, so this alloy of vice, this *dram of base*, works out, or renders useless, all the noble qualities of the mind.’

When I read this proposed emendation to the reverend and learned Mr. Robertson, he not only concurred with me, but assured me he had himself made the same amendment.

I D E M.

That thou, dead corse, again in complete steel—

Mr. Steevens, from Olaus Wormius, proves it to be a custom of the Danish kings to be buried in their armour. Seward, Earl of Northumberland, who lived in the days of Edward the Confessor, was, by his desire, buried armed at all points. But, what is more strange, Fuller, in his Worthies, relates, that one of our old savage warriors would go to bed dressed in his armour, to his new-married bride.

H O R A T I O.

— Summit of the cliff,
That beetles o'er his base into the sea.

If I understand the meaning of the word *beetle*, in this place, it looks *frowningly*, or *dreadfully*, on the ocean.—The same thought occurs, with great force, in Southern’s Oroonoko, act V.

— Oh ! for a whirlwind’s wing
To hurry us to yonder cliff, that frowns
Upon the flood.

H O R A T I O.

Heaven will direct it.

Dr. Farmer thinks the author might have written *detect* it. But the present reading includes that sense, and something more: ‘Heaven will discover what is amiss, and point out the means of correction.’

G H O S T.

Confin'd to *fast in fires*.

By *fasting in fires*, we are to understand the punishment of purgatory, or the purification of the soul by fire. I have somewhere read, that it was formerly an usual threat, of the Roman Catholic priests to their penitents, that, if they did not fast here, they must fast in a worse place.—The word *fast* stands here, by metonymy, for *punished*.

I D E M.

I am forbid

To tell the secrets of my prison-house, &c.

But this eternal blazon must not be

To ears of flesh and blood.

In Lucian's Dialogue of Menippus and Philonides, there is a sentiment which so strongly resembles this caution of the Ghost, that I am induced to believe our Shakspere had read the translation, which was published, in English verse and Latin prose, about the beginning of Queen Elizabeth's reign.

Philonides asks Menippus to discover to him the laws and decrees of the infernal judges. Menippus informs him, that it is not lawful for him to lay open, in the upper world, what he had heard in the regions below, nor to divulge the infernal secrets, lest Rhadamanthus should punish him for it.

I D E M.

I D E M.

With juice of cursed hebenon in a vial.

Dr. Gray is of opinion, that the author, or his transcriber, by a metathesis, put *hebenon* for *henebon*, which is *benbane*. I believe it would puzzle the most curious searcher to find the word *henebon* in any of our botanical books ; and I could wish the word *benbane* were substituted for *hebenon*, at least upon the stage. The doctor has quoted Galen, Dioscorides, and Wepfer, to prove its narcotic qualities. The two last ascribe to it the power of producing a delirium. But the doctor did not know, perhaps, that Hippocrates and Celsus admitted the *benbane* into their prescriptions for certain disorders, and especially for melancholy. Scribonius Largus prescribes it, in some cases, under the name of *altericus*.

I D E M.

So lust, though to a radiant angel link'd,
Will fate itself in a celestial bed,
And prey on garbage.

Thus Angelo, in Measure for Measure,

————— It is I,
Who, lying by a violet in the sun,
Do as the carrion does, not as the flower,
Corrupt with virtuous season.

H A M L E T.

In this distracted globe.

Shakspeare frequently compares the body of man to the world, or to a kingdom. As, in King John, act IV. —

Nay, in the body of this fleshly land,
This kingdom, this confine of blood and breath—

And in Julius Cæsar, act II.—

————— The state of man,
Like to a little kingdom, suffers then
The nature of an insurrection.

I D E M.

I D E M.

Swear upon my sword.

There are so many valuable notes, on this passage, in the last edition of Johnson and Steevens, 1778, that I shall only observe, it was a practice in chivalry for knights to sweat on their sword.

I D E M.

*There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.*

The poet by this observation, intended to humble the presumption and daring pride of certain philosophers, who, by arrogantly attributing known effects to causes which no human wisdom can ascertain, have disgraced their writings and misled their readers.

This act of Hamlet is singularly excellent. For richness of matter, dignity of action, and variety of character, it may challenge a preference to the first act of any tragedy, ancient or modern.—When the Ghost is first announced by the centinels, our expectation is mightily raised ; his appearance strikes with awe. The pathetic address of Horatio fixes attention, and raises the admiration of the spectators. But the vision is judiciously prevented from answering Horatio's questions ; for that would have lessened the curiosity, as well as the terror, arising from the interview between the Ghost and Hamlet ; which, for boldness of invention, strength of imagery, energy of expression, and glow of passion, exceeds any thing which can be compared with it.

In the antient Greek drama, the ghost of Darius, in the Persæ of Æschylus, is, I suppose, the only vision of the Greek drama which can be brought in competition with that of Hamlet. Darius comes not a volunteer from the dead, but is raised to the upper-

upper world by an incantation, four lines of which contain an excellent lesson to monarchs, and should be held in everlasting remembrance by princes who rashly engage in war and bloodshed :

He in realms-unpeopling war
Wasted not his subjects blood ;
Godlike in his will to spare,
In his councils wise and good.

POTTER.

Instead of giving information to the invokers of his shade, Darius questions them concerning the reasons why they desired his presence. After being acquainted with the unhappy circumstances which attended the invasion of Greece by his son, Xerxes, and after some discourse with his queen, Atossa, and pitying the fate of Persia, he then advises them to abstain from wars, as ruinous, and, in their end, destructive ; and though, at first, he could not tell the reason why they evoked him from his peaceful mansion, he now, on a sudden, describes circumstantially the unhappy fate of the Persian host in Greece.*

As the humiliation of the Persian king, and the exaltation and triumph of Greece, is the subject of Darius's appearance, we cannot wonder, that a scene, which, in reading, appears tedious to us, should be much admired and applauded in Athens. We are told, by Dr. Potter, that Æschylus is the favourite poet of Mr. Rumney, whose admirable pencil was employed on the ghost of Darius. Nor can I think that the interview, of Hamlet and his father's

* In the Eumenides of Æschylus, the ghost of Clytemnestra urges the goddesses of vengeance to punish Orestes ; but these terrible ladies are fast asleep, and answer the ghost by snoring. Can any thing, in modern plays, be more ridiculous ? Dryden's God of Dreams in his Indian Queen, is not so extravagant !

father's shade, is a subject less interesting, to call forth the attention and exercise the genius of the most eminent painter.

In the Oedipus of Dryden and Lee, the ghost of Laius is raised from hell by an incantation, part of which is borrowed from Macbeth. The occasion is important; and the composition of the whole, however inferior it is to Shakspeare, is poetical and animated.

I am at a loss to know whether the French stage would have been decorated with a ghost, had not Voltaire been struck with that of Hamlet. Thence he warmed his Semiramis with that fire which he stole from the man, whom he admires, envies, vilifies, and grossly misrepresents.

As the ghost of Darius made his appearance before the whole Persian court, so does that of Ninus in the full presence of Semiramis and the court of Babylon, which he strikes with terror and amazement. He is ushered in with loud claps of thunder and flashes of lightning. But, although the author prepared the audience for something singularly awful and terrifying, yet, after all, Ninus makes but a small figure. That little which he speaks is wrapped up in oracular obscurity; and the play, though certainly marked with genius, is so fabulous in its plot, so perplexed in its conduct, and so improbable in its catastrophe, that it will require no ghost from the dead to prophesy it will not very long be a favourite drama of the French stage. The author was highly indebted to the action of La Clairon and Le Kin: the distraction which the latter expressed, when rising from the tomb of Ninus, after killing his mother, was attended with perpetual shouts of applause.

At the last rehearsal of Semiramis, which, in
France,

France, is equal to a first representation, a whimsical conversation passed between the property-man, who presided over the thunder and lightning, and Madame La Clairon. As the fellow was preparing his bolts and flashes, he called out to the lady, ‘ Pray, madam, will you have your thunder long or short?’ She replied, *As long as Madame Dumesnil’s.* This excited a laughter which disturbed the theatrical process; but the French are quickly moved to risibility.

Hamlet’s address to the ghost, in this act, is justly esteemed one of those situations in which the actor of merit may display, to the full, his greatest abilities.—Taylor was the original performer of Hamlet; and his excellencies, in that character, were so remarkable, that, from the remembrance of them, Sir William Davenant taught Betterton a lesson which gained him universal and lasting reputation. His manner of address to the vision is recorded, by Cibber, in language so lively and terms so apposite, that the reader will not be displeased to see them quoted here.

‘ He opened the scene with a pause of mute amazement; then, rising slowly to a solemn, trembling, voice, he made the Ghost equally terrible to the spectator and himself; and, in the descriptive part of the natural emotions which the ghastly vision gave him, the boldness of his expostulation was still governed by decency; manly, but not braving; his voice never rising to that seeming outrage or wild defiance of what he naturally revered.’ And in this manner our late admirable Roscius addressed the vision.

Mr. Macklin, whose judgment merits the utmost deference, differs in his opinion, respecting the behaviour of Hamlet to the Ghost, from Betterton and

and Garrick. With pleasure I have heard him recite the speech of Hamlet to the Ghost, which he did with much force and energy. After the short ejaculation of ‘ Angels and ministers of grace, defend us ! ’ he endeavoured to conquer that fear and terror into which he was naturally thrown by the first sight of the vision, and uttered the remainder of the address calmly, but respectfully, and with a firm tone of voice, as from one who had subdued his timidity and apprehension. Mr. Henderson, a most judicious actor and accurate speaker, seems to have embraced a method not unlike that of Mr. Macklin.

How far tradition may be permitted to govern, in this question, I will not say: but Downs, the stage-historian, in his peculiar phrase, informs us, ‘ That Mr. Betterton took every particle of Hamlet from Sir William Davenant, who had seen Mr. Taylor, who was taught by Mr. Shakespeare himself.’

If we give credit to Downs, we must grant that the author was the best interpreter of his own meaning. Nor can I, indeed, conceive, that any sudden resolution, on the appearance of so questionable a shape as the vision of a dead father, can so far support a son as to be free from terror and affright. It is not in nature to assume such courage as will withstand a sight so awful and tremendous.

Towards the close of Hamlet’s speech, the words themselves are strongly expressive of the uncommon impression still remaining on his mind :

And we, fools of nature,
So horridly to shake our disposition
With thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls.

Colley Cibber, when in company with Mr. Addison at the tragedy of Hamlet, tells us, that they

were

were both surprised at the vociferous manner in which Wilks spoke to the Ghost. This was greatly censured by them both, and with justice; for awe and terror will never excite a loud and intemperate exertion of the voice.

Wilks was so far mistaken, in this treatment of Hamlet's Ghost, that Booth, one day at rehearsal, reproached him for it. 'I thought,' said he, 'Bob, that last night you wanted to play at fifty-cuffs with me: you bullied that which you ought to have revered. When I acted the Ghost with Betterton, instead of my awing him, he terrified me. But divinity hung round that man!' To this rebuke, Wilks, with his usual modesty, replied, — 'Mr. Betterton and Mr. Booth could always act as they pleased: he, for his part, must do as well as he could.'

The Ghost, though not meanly represented since the time of Booth, has never been equal to the action of that comedian. His slow, solemn, and under tone of voice, his noiseless tread, as if he had been composed of air, and his whole deportment, inspired the audience with that feeling which is excited by awful astonishment! The impression of his appearance in this part was so powerful, upon a constant frequenter of the theatres for near sixty years; that he assured me, when, long after Booth's death, he was present at the tragedy of Hamlet, as soon as the name of the Ghost was announced on the stage, he felt a kind of awe and terror, 'of which,' said he, 'I was soon cured by his appearance.' Quin, who loved and admired Booth, some years before he left the stage, to oblige his old friend, Ryan, acted the Ghost with the approbation of the public, and as near to the manner of his old master as he possibly could.

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Let me add here, that the situation of Æneas, when he is surprized by the vision of his wife Creüsa, is similar to that of Hamlet, and is strongly pictured by the exclamation of —————

Obstupui, steteruntque comæ, et vox faucibus hæsit!

These words are so expressive of extreme terror of mind, that no fortitude could enable any man to recover from it by calm effort of deliberation. The senses are too much disturbed to be brought into their proper tone by any thing but time.

C H A P. XXXVI.

Polonius and Reynolds.—Fencing.—Some passages explained.—Meaning of quoting.—Polonius's character;—discussed at large.—Polonius always acted by low comedians.—Garrick's mistake.—Woodward's failure.—Hamlet's reception of his schoolfellows.—A King's part in a play, not always desirable to the actor.—Reproach of Demosthenes to Æschines.—Garrick and Barry.—Lungs tickled with a fere.—Players inhibition.—Crying out on the question.—Hercules and his load.—Hawk from a handsaw.—Boys acting of female parts.—Altitude of a chioppine.—What a chioppine is.—Clergy and players at variance.—Remarkable story to the honour of a comedian.—Visage warm'd.—Baron and Betterton.—Remarkable story of guilt acknowledged by a scene of a play.—Dr. Barrowby and a London apprentice.—Tent him to the quick.—Murder of Mr. Derby, by Fisher.—Behaviour of Fisher at the play of Hamlet.—Ben Jonson's quarrel with the players.—Wilks.—His defect in utterance.—Barry.—Garrick's superiority.

A C T II. Scene I.

Polonius and Reynold.

P O L O N I U S.

Drinking — fencing.

FE N C I N G is here, I think, put, in our author's phrase, for *brawling* or *quarrelling*. A fencer, in the days of Shakspeare, was generally understood to be one apt to be contentious and quarrelsome.

22 DRAMATIC MISCELLANIES.

I D E M.

Breathe his faults so quaintly.

That is, so artfully, so discreetly.

I D E M.

And I believe it is a fetch of warrant.

‘ I think it a very justifiable mode of enquiring into my son’s conduct.’

This scene, between Polonius and his servant, Reynold, has not been acted for more than a century, and is by no means essential to the play.

O P H E L I A.

And to the last bended their lights on me.

The first indication of his assumed madness Hamlet gives to Ophelia, from a supposition that she would impart immediate information of it to her father.

P O L O N I U S.

I am sorry that with better judgment
I had not quoted him.

To quote is to write notes and observations from sermons or books, or to make remarks in a table-book or memorandum. In doing this, a mistake or blunder may easily be made.

Scene II.

P O L O N I U S.

My liege and madam.

In the delineation of Polonius’s character, two great writers, Dr. Warburton and Dr. Johnson, differ widely. The first makes him a weak man and a pedantic statesman. The other places him in a much superior rank: with him, Polonius is a man who

who has been bred in courts, exercised in business, stored with observations, confident of his knowledge, proud of his eloquence, but declining into dotage ; in short, it is by the advance of age alone that Dr. Johnson solves the seeming inconsistency in the conduct of Polonius. The whole argument is elaborately written ; but I cannot submit to that decision, which pronounces that this statesman was ever strong in intellect or eloquent in discourse. There is but one passage in the play which favours the supposed dereliction of this man's faculties ; and that is, in the instructions he gives his servant, in the 1st scene of the 2d act, relating to him observations of his son's conduct ; but, in the recapitulation of precepts, or maxims, independent of each other, and where there is no concatenation of reasoning, a very young, as well as an old, man may easily suffer a lapse of memory. In all other situations of the character, he is ever ready and furnished with such materials as are suited to his incapacity and presumption. His logic and rhetoric, to prove that Hamlet is in love with his daughter, are sufficiently flowing, and, though weak and absurd; betray no declension of his faculties. Such powers of mind as Polonius ever had he seems to enjoy with vigour ; and can boast, with Charon, the *cruda viridisque senectus*.— While the body remains unhurt by disease or outward accident, the mind, by being kept in continual exercise, stretches its faculties, and improves more and more. I could produce instances in Tully and Bacon ; and, with still more propriety, in Sophocles and Bishop Hoadley. But why need I go farther than Dr. Johnson himself ? He is advanced some years above the age of seventy, without the least symptom of intellectual decay. Is not his last work, of the Critical and Biographical

Biographical Prefaces, equal to any book he hath written?

But indeed there are abundant instances of the radical weakness of this character disseminated throughout the play. Hamlet, notwithstanding he loves his daughter, Ophelia, wherever he meets him, turns him into ridicule, and never speaks of him, when absent, but with scorn and contempt. Hamlet is thirty years old; he could not but know if Polonius ever had been wife; and would not meanly take the advantage of doting age to hold him up to laughter. When the Prince dismisses the Players, he takes the manager aside; he bids him follow Polonius, and take care he does not mock him. To ridicule the infirmities of age was not the player's business, but the evident absurdity and folly of the man justified the caution. To conclude: when Hamlet drags the dead body of this wretched politician from his hiding-place, he sums up his character in very sarcastical terms:

————— Indeed this counsellor
Is now most still, most secret, and most grave,
Who was, in life, a foolish prating knave.

This, he says, in the presence of the Queen, after he had confessed that his madness was assumed. Polonius is in no respect, that I know of, to be esteemed. He is more obsequious and officious than he ought to be; a conduct which borders on knavery.

Mirabel's character of Witwou'd, in the Way of the World, may help us to solve the difficulties which arise from some pertinent observations in the old statesman: 'He is a fool with a good memory; but, that failing, his folly is betrayed by not having recourse to his common-place book.' Every man must recollect amongst his acquaintance, some very silly

silly people, who surprize their hearers by throwing out remarks above their usual course of converse. To this tribe of men we may apply a line of Mr. Pope :

The fool lies hid in inconsistencies.

The constant practice of the stage, from the revival of Hamlet, soon after the restoration, to this day, may perhaps contribute to justify my opinion of this character. Polonius was always acted by what is termed a low comedian : By Lovell, Nokes, and Cross, in former times ; who were succeeded by Griffin, Hippisley, Taswell, and Shuter ; and these again by Wilson, Baddeley, and Edwin, in the present times.

About five and twenty years since, Mr. Garrick had formed a notion, that the character of Polonius had been mistaken and misrepresented by the players, and that he was not designed by the author to excite laughter and be an object of ridicule. He imagined, I suppose, with his friend, Dr. Johnson, that his false reasoning and false wit were mere accidents in character ; and that his leading feature was dotage encroaching upon wisdom, which, by the bye, is no object of theatrical satire, and far from being, what is averred by the great commentator, a noble design in the author. Full of this opinion, Mr. Garrick persuaded Woodward, on his benefit-night, to put himself in the part of Polonius. And what was the consequence ? — The character, divested of his ridiculous vivacity, appeared to the audience flat and insipid. His dress was very different from what the part generally wore : the habit was grave and rich, cloth of scarlet and gold. Whether this was in imitation of some statesman of the times I will not be positive, though

I have heard it so asserted. So little was the audience pleased with Woodward, or Woodward with himself, that he never after attempted Polonius.

P O L O N I U S.

— — — — A short tale to make,
Fell into a sadness, &c.

The statesman's description, of the several stages of Hamlet's madness, gives no proof that his faculties are declining; but rather of an inventive and ductile mind, which is ready to propagate any tale, or advance any proposition, which might serve to prove his great wisdom and sagacity.

I D E M.

If he love her not——

We see, by this, the drift of the cunning statesman; who, by this discovery of Hamlet's passion for his daughter, hopes to gain him for a son-in-law. This is, in our author, a stroke of nature.

H A M L E T.

You are a *fishmonger*.

The word *fishmonger* is made use of by Hamlet to disguise his real meaning, which is, ‘ You are a *fisherman*, and angle for me; you want to know my real designs, or to pluck out the heart of my mystery.’

I D E M.

For, if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog——

Dr. Warburton's noble interpretation of this passage cannot be too much commended. Though the thought is not very similar, it brings to my mind what Diogenes said to one, who reproached him for living in filthy places: *The sun visits kennels, yet is not defiled.*

I D E M.

I D E M.

I am poor in thanks.

Hamlet receives his old schoolfellows with a mixture of real distrust and affected ceremony ; they come upon him unawares, unannounced, and uninvited.

I D E M.

Nay, then, I have an eye on you.

'I see plainly I must be on my guard. These men, I find, are mere agents of mighty employers ; and are no other than court spies.'

I D E M.

How noble in reason ! How infinite in faculties ! In form and moving, how like a god ! &c.

In uttering this beautiful description of man and his powers, the energy of Garrick was very striking ; and the noble figure and movement of Barry added a double force to the sentiment. Notwithstanding this, I am of opinion, that, in this argument, in which Hamlet pretends to account for his melancholy, the actor is generally too tame and temperate in speech and action, and too forgetful of the part he has assumed.

I D E M.

He that plays the King shall be welcome.

The parts of Kings are not always the most coveted by actors. King Duncan in Macbeth, Claudio in Hamlet, &c. are rather of the second or third class than the first. Nor was the diadem or the purple robe a certain proof of characteristical superiority amongst the Greek players. Demosthenes, in his oration De falsa Legatione, upbraids Æschines with his being an actor of third parts ; but, says the orator, the great emoluments, sought

after, by these low actors, in the exhibition of Kings, were, to enter the stage dressed in the royal habiliments, bearing in their hands the regal sceptre. ‘Theodosius and Aristodemus, the prime actors, often personated Antigone, while you, Æschines, strutted in King Creon in the same play.’

R O S E N C R A U S.

We *cote* them on the way.

To *cote* is a Shropshire term for to *overtake*.

H A M L E T.

Whose lungs are tickled with the *sere*.

That is: ‘The mirth of the fool, or clown, is so powerful, that it will raise laughter in those whose age and gravity are unused to it.’ What Falstaff says to the Chief Justice is something similar: ‘Your lordship has somewhat of the saltiness of age about you.’ The *sere* and the *yellow leaf* are words expressive of decay.

R O S E N C R A U S.

The inhibition comes by means of the late *innovation*.

But what *innovation*? The author did not mean, that the theatre was shut, by an order from above, on account of particular scandal being given by the established players. Mr. Malone has proved, that the intention, of the act referred to, was quite opposite to the interpretation given it by the commentators. The *innovation* seems to be, the unexpected encouragement given to the singing-boys of the queen’s chapel and St. Paul’s, by which the regular comedians were reduced to the necessity of visiting the provinces. They were therefore obliged to inhibit themselves in the metropolis, from the want of customers.

I D E M.

Cry out upon the top of the question.

These children, instead of representing the several characters allotted them with propriety, assumed a turgid style in speaking ; for true feeling, and real passion, they substituted strut and noise. In plain terms, they tore a passion to rags.

H A M L E T.

What ! are they children ?

Heywood, in his apology for actors, complains, that the poets of his time employed children to vent their malicious scandal, and utter abuse against private characters. He insisted, at the same time, that the established theatres never encouraged such infamous practices.

R O S E N C R A U S.

Hercules and his load too.

I understand, by this, that the children-actors did not only get the better of all the other established companies, but also of the comedians of the Globe, on the Bank-side, which was esteemed the most perfect of any. The figure of Hercules supporting a globe was fixed on the outside of the play-house.

H A M L E T.

I am but mad north-west ; but, when the wind is southerly, I know a hawk from a *handsaw*.

Hanmer has, I think, very properly, altered the word *handsaw* to *hernshaw*, notwithstanding Dr. Warburton's observation, that the poet found the proverb thus corrupted in the mouths of the people. But will a prince, or a well-bred-man, adopt

adopt the vulgarisms of the mob? Will a Westminster scholar say, for *The little Cœmetry*, *The little Sentry*, because he hears it so pronounced every day? Will a gentleman say, the *Pee-aches* in *Common Garden*, instead of the *Piazza* in *Covent Garden*, because the market-people use that corruption?

P O L O N I U S.

Scene undividable and poem unlimited.

A drama which is confined to place, and another unlimited by rules.

H A M L E T.

What! my young lady and mistress! I wish your voice, like a piece of uncurrent gold, be not cracked within the ring.

Hamlet addresses himself to the young lad who acted the female character. Before the Restoration, women's parts, says Cibber, were acted by boys, and men with effeminate countenances. Hart and Mohun were apprentices to Robinson and another eminent comedian, and acted female characters. The voices of girls do not alter like those of boys, which generally, at a certain age, become rough and manly. However, the *liberal* language of Shakespeare, to use a phrase of his own, is well explained, by authorities adduced from Ben Jonson by Mr. Steevens.

I D E M.

The altitude of a *chippine*.

High-heeled shoes were formerly worn by women of rank. Tom Coriat in his *Crudities* mentions some that were of such a height, that it was scarcely possible to walk with them. He tells a story

story of a Venetian lady, who exposed herself to laughter by tumbling down, on account of her *chioppines* being made so very exalted.

The old English word for high-heeled shoes, was *mails*, which Dr. Skinner thus defines : *Calcei altioribus soleis suppacti, olim regibus et magnatibus usitati.*

The word *chioppine* means also a Scotch measure, for liquor, which answers to our pint.

I D E M.

See the players well bestowed. They are the abstract and brief chronicles of the times.

The encouragement which the players met with from the people, who forsook the churches to croud the theatres, brought on them the resentment and censure of the clergy of our own church as well as of the puritans. Their lives were examined with an inquisitorial acrimony, and their actions grossly misrepresented. Our author, in common with his brethren, felt and resented the unjust attack ; he has therefore devoted this part of his play to a vindication of the stage.

I D E M.

After your death you had better have a bad epitaph than their ill report while you live.

A sarcastic epitaph is not felt by the dead ; but a bad or ridiculous character of the living, by men so universally known, and so generally welcome, as the comedians, may be followed with some inconvenience.

Of all the commentators upon our author, Dr. Johnson seems to keep most clear of illiberal reproaches on the player-editors. He does not charge them,

them, like others, with gross ignorance and incapacity. Theobald, Warburton, and another critic, have, on this subject, sometimes indulged an asperity of phrase not very becoming the style of gentlemen.

I shall here, in honour of the profession of players, subjoin a passage, I lately read, in an oration of Demosthenes, against Æschines, *De falsa Legatione*, and which reflects great credit upon Satyrus, a very eminent comic actor of Athens. This man was the friend and instructor of Demosthenes; and, at the same time, remarkable for mimicking his defects, which tended, as much, perhaps, as any thing, to render him an accomplished orator. I am persuaded the reader will excuse my introducing it in this place, especially as the learned Dr. Leland has not translated that oration which Ascham terms a school of instruction in itself.

‘ When Philip of Macedon had taken the city of Olynthus, he celebrated the Olympic games. He invited to the festival all the professors of the polite arts. He entertained them with the choicest banquets, and bestowed crowns upon the victors. During the height of the festival, he asked Satyrus, the comedian, why, of all his guests, he alone had asked for no gift, nor had desired any mark of his favour? Did he suppose him to be of a mean and sordid disposition? or did he conceive that he had entertained any ill will towards him?

‘ Satyrus modestly replied, that he stood in no need of those acts of munificence which others demanded. What he should request of the king could with the greatest facility be granted; but he had some fears lest his petition should be rejected.

jected. Philip encouraged him to urge his demand ; and, with a facetious gaiety, assured him, that he would refuse him nothing he should ask.

‘ Satyrus then informed the king, that his old acquaintance and host, Apollophanes of Pydna, having been slain through treachery, his relations, terrified at the accident, had, for safety, conveyed his two young daughters to Olynthus ; but, as that city had now become subjugated to his majesty’s arms, they were in the condition of prisoners and captives. Now the sole boon I shall beg of you, continued the player, is, that you would give orders for their deliverance into my hands ; not for the sake of gaining any advantage to myself, but that I may bestow on them portions equal to their birth and education, and prevent their falling into any hardships or disgrace unworthy of me or their father.

‘ The whole assembly, upon hearing this generous request of Satyrus, broke out into loud and tumultuous applause ; and Philip, with a good grace, immediately complied with his wishes.’

H A M L E T.

All his visage *warm'd*.

Instead of *warm'd*, Dr. Warburton would substitute *wann'd*. The context may possibly afford some ground for that alteration ; but I cannot agree, with Mr. Steevens, that the actor never turns pale in representing extreme agony and distress of mind. In some very affecting scenes, Garrick and Mrs. Cibber have worked themselves up to the shedding of tears, especially in the parts of Lear and Cordelia. Mrs. Siddons, very lately, in the third act of the Fair Penitent, was so far

affected, with assuming the mingled passions of pride, fear, anger, and conscious guilt, that I might appeal to the spectators, whether, in spite of the rouge which the actress is obliged to put on, some paleness did not shew itself in her countenance. I think, too, that Mrs. Cibber, Mrs. Yates, Mrs. Crawford, and Miss Younge, have given the same proof of consummate feeling in scenes of a similar nature.

The history of the French theatre records something still more difficult in the art of acting : of an actor's turning pale and red in the uttering of a single line. When Barron, after a secession of almost thirty years, returned to the stage, he chose, on his first re-appearance, the part of Cinna, in the tragedy of that name. His manner was so different from what they had been long used to, from the vicious habits of the reigning actors, that he was at first coldly received, till he repeated the following lines, in which he drew a lively portrait of the Conspirators, in that tragedy :

Vous eussiez vu leurs yeux s'enflammer de fureur ;
Et dans le même instant, par un effet contraire,
Leurs fronts *palir* d'horreur et *rougir* de colere.

My author * says, that, when he pronounced the last line, Barron's paleness of countenance was visible, and which was rapidly succeeded by a flush of red. This convinced the spectators, that this great actor entered, by a kind of magic force, into the spirit of the character.

The following account of Betterton's amazing feeling will furnish a proof, that, when the player
is

* *Anecdotes Dramatiques.*

is truly impressed with his character, he will, in the representation of fear and terror, assume a pallid hue, as well as the contrary complexion from different emotions :

‘ I have lately been told, by a gentleman who has frequently seen Betterton perform Hamlet, that he observed his countenance, which was naturally ruddy and sanguine, in the scene of the third act where his father’s ghost appears, through the violent and sudden emotion of amazement and horror, turn, instantly, on the sight of his father’s spirit, as pale as his neckcloth ; when his whole body seemed to be affected with a tremor inexpressible ; so that, had his father’s ghost actually risen before him, he could not have been seized with more real agonies. And this was felt so strongly by the audience, that the blood seemed to shudder in their veins likewise ; and they, in some measure, partook of the astonishment and horror with which they saw this excellent actor affected.’ *

I D E M.

Tears in his eyes, distraction in his aspect !

‘ Tears in his eyes, distraction in his aspect,’ imply grief and distress in the utmost degree ; consequently the face is not *warmed*, or reddened, with rage or resentment, such as I have seen in honest Ryan’s countenance, when agitated with a supposed view of Duncan’s body, in Macbeth.

H A M-

* Laureat, p. 31.

H A M L E T.

What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba?

Mr. Upton and Sir John Hawkins have, in reference to this line, quoted the story of the Phe-
rean tyrant, who quitted the theatre with tears,
on seeing the distress of Hecuba in the tragedy of
the Troades. To this story Mr. Pope alludes in
his prologue to Cato :

Tyrants no more their savage natures kept,
And, foes to virtue, wonder'd how they wept.

Upon a line in this speech of Hamlet, Mr. Steevens observes, that there must have been, in the time of Shakspere, several very excellent tragedians, or he would not have formed characters such as Hamlet, Lear, &c. which he had no prospect of seeing represented with force and propriety. Mr. Steevens may know, that the principal tragic parts of Shakspere were acted chiefly by Burbage and Taylor. Allen, the other great actor, is not in the lists of Shakspere's, Ben Jonson's, and Beaumont and Fletcher's, plays.

I D E M.

Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless, villain!

Besides the jingle of *lecherous* and *treacherous*, the first is become almost obsolete, and, in compliance with modern manners, should be omitted, or exchanged for a word less offensive.

I D E M.

————— I have heard,
That guilty creatures, sitting at a play,
Have, by the very cunning of the scene,
Been struck so to the soul, that presently
They have proclaim'd their malefactions.

The

The author alludes to a known story, that was recent in the memory of those who were the first spectators of this tragedy ; and is recorded by T. Heywood, in his Apology for Actors, published in 1612. ‘ The comedians, belonging to the Earl of Sussex, acted a play, called Frier Francis, at Lynn Regis, in Norfolk, in which the story of a woman was represented, who, to enjoy, unmolested, the company of a young fellow, had murdered her husband : she is brought on the stage as haunted by his ghost. — During the exhibition of this play, a woman, who was an inhabitant of Lynn, was so struck with what she saw upon the stage, that she shrieked, and cried out, Oh ! my husband ! my husband ! Upon the people’s enquiring the reason of this exclamation, she confessed, that, several years before that time, to secure the love of a certain gentleman, she had poisoned her husband, whose fearful image seemed to appear before her in the shape of the ghost in the play. The woman was afterwards tried and condemned for the fact.’ For the truth of this story, Heywood refers his readers to the records of Lynn, and many living witnesses.

A more recent effect of stage-representation, to rouse a sense of guilt in the mind of a spectator, has been told me with such proofs of authenticity that I cannot disbelieve it.

Dr. Barrowby was, many years since, sent for to attend a young lad who was an apprentice to a tradesman in the city : he found him extremely indisposed and low-spirited. After some questions, asked him by the doctor, the boy said, his distemper was owing to his having lately seen the tragedy of George Barnwell. His case, he said, resembled Barnwell’s so far as the robbing of his master ;

master ; and this, he said, lay very heavy upon his mind.

I D E M.-

I'll *tent* him to the quick.

Dr. Johnson interprets *tent* to be the searching his conscience, as *tents* are applied to probe wounds. This meaning I shall not contradict. But *to tent* is a north-country phrase, which signifies, *to look to*, *to attend to*. Ray, from Cheshire Dialogues, gives this proverb : ‘ I'll *tent* thee, quoth Wood : ’ that is, I'll *watch thee narrowly*. And perhaps this meaning may be farther confirmed by what Hamlet afterwards says to Horatio, in the next act :

For I my eyes will rivet fast to his.

To take tent is a Scotch phrase, at this day, for advising a person to be *attentive* to a particular business.

I D E M.

————— The play's the thing
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King.

That the representation of murder, before the murderer, will not always produce the desired effect, we have a remarkable instance in the story of Derby and Fisher :

They were two gentlemen very intimately acquainted. The latter was a dependent on the former, who generously supplied him with the means of living as became a man of birth and education. But no benefits are sufficient to bind the base and the ungrateful : after parting, one evening, with Mr. Derby, at his chambers in the Temple, with all the usual marks of friendship,

Fisher

Fisher contrived to get into his apartments, with an intent to rob and murder his friend. This he unhappily accomplished. For some time, no suspicion fell on the murderer; he appeared, as usual, in all public places. He was in a side-box at the play of Hamlet; and, when Wilks uttered that part of the soliloquy, which spoke of ‘ guilty creatures sitting at a play,’ a lady turned about, and, looking at him, said, ‘ I wish the villain, who murdered Mr. Derby, were here!’ The lady and Fisher were strangers to each other. It was afterwards known, that this was the man who had killed his friend. The persons, present in the box, declared, that neither the speech from the actor, nor the exclamation from the lady, made the least external impression on the murderer. Fisher soon after escaped to Rome, where he professed himself a Roman Catholic, and gained an asylum. About five and twenty years since, my friend, Mr. Richard Wilson, the landscape-painter, saw Fisher at Rome, and spoke to him. He was then, I think, one of the conoscenti, and a picture-dealer.*

Since the first acting of this tragedy, the commentators are agreed that the author made many additions to it; more especially, it is thought, respecting the players, whose cause was his own, and which he espoused upon the general topic of defence, that it was not only not *malum in se*, but really beneficial to society, and particularly in the detection of enormous crimes. — Hamlet, we see, puts his salvation upon the trial of his uncle’s guilt in the representation of a play; he places more confidence in the success of this plot than in a vision

* Mr. Derby was son of the secondary in the prothonotary’s office.

vision that had assumed the form of his *noble father*. But this was not all; a quarrel had arisen between Ben Jonson and the players; the real cause is almost unknown; but it is certain, that the three or four of his pieces, which Ben wrote after his Every Man out of his Humour, were acted by children. One of them, called the Poetafter, was an outrageous satire upon Decker and several of the actors. I have said so much upon this subject, in a review of Jonson's pieces, that I shall not here take up much of the reader's time. — Shakspeare, we see, has discussed the argument, relative to the encouragement of the children preferably to the established comedians, with great judgment and temper. And I think I can perceive some lesson of caution, given to Jonson and others, on account of their affected contempt of the players: ‘ You had better have a bad epitaph, after your death, than their ill report while you live,’ seems to be of this kind. This rupture, between Jonson and the players, lasted, I believe, from 1599, till the death of Queen Elizabeth, in 1603. It is not impossible but that King James, who loved and patronised theatrical diversions, by the personal encouragement he gave to Shakspeare, might be the means of reconciling the contending parties. We know that Shakspeare assisted Jonson in writing his Sejanus; and Dr. Johnson and Dr. Farmer are of opinion that Ben wrote part of the prologue and epilogue to Henry VIII. The ill fate of Sejanus, at the Globe, did not deter Jonson from giving the same players his Fox and Alchemist. But so capricious was his temper, that, notwithstanding the deserved success of these comedies, he employed children to act his Silent Woman, a piece utterly unfit, I should think,

think, to be represented by any but actors of the most established merit.

In the speaking of this impassioned soliloquy, Wilks had an ample field to display the warmth of his disposition. The actor's genuine temper sometimes combines itself so strongly with the feelings appropriated to the character, that the scene receives additional advantage from it. The various passions of the speech he felt with energy and expressed with vehemence ; to give force to sentiment, this player would sometimes strike the syllables, with too much ardour, and, in the judicious ear, create something like dissonance rather than harmony ; but this was not frequent with him.

In this situation of Hamlet, Barry was pleasingly animated. But here it must be owned, that Garrick rose superior to all competition : his self-expostulations, and upbraidings of cowardice and pusillanimity, were strongly pointed, and blended with marks of contemptuous indignation ; the description of his uncle held up, at once, a portrait of horror, and derision. When he closed his strong paintings with the epithet, *kindless* villain ! a tear of anguish gave a most pathetic softness to the whole passionate ebullition. One strong feature of Hamlet's character is filial piety : this Garrick preserved through the part. By restoring a few lines, which preceding Hamlets had omitted, he gave a vigour, as well as connection, to the various members of the soliloquy. It is impossible to forget the more than common attention of the audience, which his action and change of voice commanded when he pronounced —

I have heard,
That guilty creatures, sitting at a play—
and the following lines, to the end of the act.

C H A P. XXXVII.

Treachery of Guildenstern and Rosencraus.—*Soliloquy of To be or not to be.*—*Resemblance of part of it to the sentiments of Socrates, in his apology to the Areopagus.*—*Greek quotation.*—*Latin version.*—*Young's Revenge.*—*Whips and scorns of time.*—*Mr. Steevens.*—*Quietus.*—*Bodkin explained.*—*Wilks.*—*His utterance of To be or not to be.*—*His greatest error in deportment.*—*Garrick's expression—and action.*—*Assumed madness, to Ophelia, by Garrick, Barry, Sheridan, Henderson.*—*Advice to the players.*—*Periwig-pated fellows.*—*Madame Couvreur.*—*La Clairon, Le Kin.*—*Full-bottom wigs;*—*worn till 1720.*—*Addison, Congreve, Wilks, Booth, and Cibber.*—*Macbeth new-dressed by Macklin.*—*Antient and modern pantomimes.*—*Augustus, and Pylades the mime.*—*Age and body of the time.*—*Tarleton and Kempe.*—*Hippisley, Shuter, King.*—*Pinkethman and Wilks.*—*Odd agreement.*—*Anecdote of Pinkethman.*—*Henderson's excellence.*—*Horatio and Pylades.*—*Chorus.*—*Dr. Hurd.*—*Mrs. Montague and Mr. Colman.*—*Ridiculous practice of stage-murderers.*—*Garrick's unvaried action.*—*Forest of feathers and a cry of players.*—*Paddock and Peacock.*—*Duty too bold explained.*—*Fear personified.*—*The King's soliloquy.*—*Keen, Quin.*—*Hulet.*—*How his audit stands.*—*Hamlet's vindictive temper.*—*Voltaire's rat trapped.*—*As kill a king.*—*None wed the second but who kill'd the first.*—*Queen charged with murder.*—*Takes off the rose, &c. explained differently from Mr. Steevens.*—*The nature of motion—Several passages attempted to be explained.*—*Two pictures in little.*—*Stage trick of the actor at the entrance of the Ghost.*—*My father in his habit, as he liv'd.*—*Unpeg the basket on the house-top explained.*

plained.—Just suspicions, in Hamlet, of his two schoolfellows.—Merit of the scene between Hamlet and his mother.—Taylor, Betterton, Wilks, Milward.—Garrick.—Barry.—Sheridan—Hender-son.—Smith.—Lady Slingsby.—Mrs. Porter, Mrs. Hallam, Mrs. Pritchard.

Act III. Scene I.

The King, Queen, &c.

G U I L D E N S T E R N.

But with a crafty madness keeps aloof,
When we would bring him to some confession
Of his true state.

THIS speech of Guildenstern contains a full confirmation of the baseness and treachery of these schoolfellows of Hamlet, who betray him, as far as lies in their power, to the King. In their commerce with the Prince, they seem to have nothing in view, but, at his expence, with the loss of their own honour, to gain *such thanks as fits a king's remembrance.*

H A M L E T.

To be or not to be.

This celebrated soliloquy will be admired, got by rote, and constantly repeated, by all persons of taste, as long as the existence of our language.

Some lines of this speech bear such a strong resemblance to an argument, relating to the future existence of the soul, in Plato's *Apology of Socrates* before the *Areopagus*, that, if that part of the great philosopher's works had been translated into English in our author's life-time, I should have imagined he had thence borrowed several sentiments in

in the soliloquy. But, in Mr. Malone's accurate list, of antient authors translated into English in the reigns of Elizabeth and James, the Dialogue of Axiochus is the only part of Plato then published in English.

The passage, in this author, I refer to, is in the 32d section of the *Apologia*, as follows in the Greek. Foster's edit. Ox. 1765.

Δυοιν γαρ θατερον εστι το τεθυαναι· η γαρ οιον μηδεν ειναι,
μηδ' αισθησιν μηδεμιαν μηδενος εχειν τον τεθυεωτα, η κατα-
τα λεγουμενα μεταβολη τις τυγχανεις υστα και μετοικησις της
ψυχης τα τοπια τη ευθενεις εις αλλον τοπον· και ειτε δη μηδεμια
αισθησις εστιν, αλλ' οιον υπνω·, επιειδαν τις καθενδαν μηδε-
ειαρ μηδεν οφα, θαυμασιον κερδον αν ειη ο θανατος.

Mors enim *necessæ est* sit alterum de duobus: ut aut in nihilum redeat, et omnes omnino sensus amittant mortuus; aut, quemadmodum dicitur, in aliud quendam locum ex his locis morte migretur. Et si sensus extinguitur, morsque ei somno similis est qui nonnunquam sine visis somniorum placatissimam quietem affert, immensum sane lucrum est emori.

The θαυμασιον κερδος of the original seems to answer fully to our author's *consummation devoutly to be wished for*. The rest of the section, though admirable, is different in argument from the remaining part of the soliloquy. But Dr. Young has, in his *Revenge*, taken advantage of a noble sentiment of Socrates, who pleases himself with the idea of meeting, in the other world, the shades of Minos, Rhadamanthus, Æacus, Triptolemus, &c.—So Alonzo, in the fourth act of the *Revenge*.

Death joins us to the great majority!
'Tis to be born to Plato's and to Cæsars;
'Tis to be great for ever!

I D E M.

For who would bear the whips and scorns of time?

Notwithstanding all the learned commentators have said on these words, it seems to me very obvious, that, without any particular allusion to his own age, the author meant a general sentiment concerning such common wrongs and afflictions to which life, and especially long life, is ever exposed.

Mr. Steevens, in addition to his large note on this quotation, assures us, that there was more illiberal private abuse, and peevish satire, published in the reigns of Queen Elizabeth and King James I. than in any other age, except the present.

This is not very clear to me: but happy is the man, who can, with a good conscience, affirm, he never was guilty of the base practice of wounding the fair reputation of others, or of disturbing the peace of families by malicious and rancorous slander. The propagation of obloquy, to gain wealth and preferment, may admit of some exculpation; but, of all abuse, that, which is spontaneous and unprovoked, is the most unaccountable.—What does Mr. Steevens think of a gentleman, who, when at his country-seat, found no amusement so pleasing as writing libels upon his neighbours, and throwing them over their garden-walls, with a malevolent design to torment those who had never offended him?

I D E M.

— Himself might his *quietus* make
With a bare *bodkin*.

The word *quietus* is well explained, from good authority, by Mr. Steevens.—But to instance a *Roman dagger* for a *bodkin*, when the author most certainly means the smallest instrument of destruction that

that can be used, is surely a very great misapplication of criticism. Skinner explains *bodkin* to be *crinium incerniculum, seu discerniculum; acus crinalus, a hair pin or needle*, which, if properly applied, would dispatch a man as soon as a dagger or a sword. All the authorities, produced in this place to authenticate the application of the word *bodkin* as synonymous to *dagger* or *stiletto*, serve only to mislead the reader.

Wilks spoke this soliloquy with a pleasing melancholy of countenance and grave despondency of action. He was less skilful in the utterance of sentiment than passion. His greatest fault, in deportment, proceeded from his aptness to move or shift his ground. It was said of him, by a sour critic, that he could never stand still.—This fault he never could entirely free himself from, though often put in mind of it.

Barry, not having middle tones in his voice, could not give the requisite grave energy to sentiment; he was therefore obliged, in some situations of character, to raise his powers of speech above their ordinary tone. Garrick, by an expressive countenance and flexible voice, gave full force to the profound reflections of this meditation on futurity, which he pursued, through all their progress, with exquisite judgment and address.

I D E M.

————— Nymph, in thy orisons
Be all my sins remember'd.

This, says Dr. Johnson, is a touch of nature; for Hamlet, on the sight of Ophelia, does not recollect himself; he forgets that he was to personate the madman.—It is very true; for it was not possible that he could, after such solemn sentiments, assume imme-

immediately a personated character. He does not affect insanity, it should be observed, till Ophelia offers to return his love-presents. This awakens him into a sense of his situation; as, from that circumstance, he must conclude, that her behaviour to him was regulated by her father, and perhaps with the King's concurrence.

I D E M.

Virtue cannot so inoculate our old stock, but we shall relish of it.

' Notwithstanding all our endeavours to the contrary, the sin of our first parents will be predominant.'

I D E M.

To a nunnery go.

The assumed madness with Ophelia was, by Garrick, in my opinion, made too boisterous. He should have remembered, that he was reasoning with a young lady, to whom he had professed the tenderness of passion. Wilks retained enough of disguised madness; but, at the same time, preserved the feelings of a lover and the delicacy of a gentleman. Barry was not so violent as Garrick, and was consequently nearer to the intention of the author. Sheridan, Smith, and Henderson, have all, in this scene, avoided a manner too outrageous.

Scene II.

Hamlet and the players.

H A M L E T.

Speak the speech, &c.

I have always considered the advice of Hamlet to the Players as Shakspeare's legacy of love to his fellows,

lows, the comedians. Such he called them in his life-time, and such he termed some of them in his will. Wilks, I believe, never spoke it ; and I conjecture it was omitted, from the death of Betterton, till the good taste of Garrick revived it. The rules were such as became the mouth of a consummate master in his profession.

I D E M.

Oh ! it offends me to the soul, to hear a robustious *periwigged* fellow tear a passion to tatters.

Long is the period before taste and judgment can prevail over established custom, be it ever so erroneous.

The first French actress, who introduced a remarkable change in the female theatrical habit, was Madame Couvreur.* To the body of the robe she added a long and majestic train, more conformable to the antique. But the heroes of antiquity, on the French stage, were as absurdly habited as the heroines. Scipio, Cæsar, and Brutus, wore indeed the antient cuirasses and buskins ; but their heads were covered with French hats, and adorned with large plumes of feathers. La Clairon and Le Kin, from a love to the art, which they cultivated with a superior taste, have entirely altered the old mode of dressing, and rendered it more conformable to the *costume*.

The heads of the English actors were, for a long time, covered with large full-bottomed periwigs, a fashion introduced in the reign of Charles II. which was not entirely disused in public till about the year 1720. Addison, Congreve, and Steele, met, at Button's coffee-house, in large, flowing,

* This celebrated actress died in 1730.

flowing, flaxen, wigs ; Booth, Wilks, and Cibber, when full-dressed, wore the same. Till within these twenty-five years, our Tamerlanes and Catos had as much hair on their heads as our judges on the bench. — Booth was a classical scholar, and well acquainted with the polite arts ; he was conversant with the remains of antiquity, with busts, coins, &c. nor could he approve such a violation of propriety ; but his indolence got the better of his good taste, and he became a conformist to a custom which he despised. I have been told, that he and Wilks bestowed forty guineas each on the exorbitant thatching of their heads. We have, at length, emancipated ourselves from the usual mode of ornamenting our heroes, and are coming nearer to truth and nature. The tragedy of Macbeth would have been still dressed in modern habits, if the good taste of Mr. Macklin had not introduced the old highland military habit. Is it not an absolute contradiction to common sense, that the play of Hamlet should in dress be modernized, and the King of Denmark wear an order which was instituted several hundred years after the action of the tragedy ? It is but within these twenty years, that the plays, of Richard III. and Henry VIII. were distinguished by the two principal characters being dressed with propriety, though differently from all the rest. Falstaff was, till very lately, an unique in dress as well as character.

I D E M.

Inexplicable dumb shows and noise.

Those dumb representations, as they are well explained, from authority, by Mr. Steevens, did

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not

not resemble either antient or modern pantomimes. The antient mimes were so expert at the representation of thought by action, that, in process of time, they became greater favourites, with the people of Rome, than the comedians themselves. Some of them had the art to represent the action of an entire play, such as the Hercules furens, to the delight and astonishment of the spectators. So great a darling of the Romans was Pylades, in representing characters by dancing with emotion, that, it is said, Augustus reconciled the people to many disagreeable imposts by recalling him from banishment, a penalty he had incurred by pointing to a spectator, with his finger, who had displeased him.

I D E M.

— — — The very age and body of the time his form and pressure.

From acting, Hamlet is insensibly drawn into a partial description of dramatic fable. I think, with submission to Dr. Johnson and Mr. Steevens, that, ‘the age and body of the time’ means the particular vices and follies of the age we live in; to correct these is the business of the dramatic poet. In Aristophanes, and other antient dramatists, the moral and political history of their times might have been partly traced. In Shakspeare, Ben Jonson, Fletcher, and Massinger, well understood, we might find some actions portrayed of the age in which *they* lived.

I D E M.

And let those, that play your Clowns, speak no more than is set down for them.

Tarleton

Tarleton and Kempe, who were excellent comic actors in our author's days, and generally personated the Fool, or Clown, were men of ready wit and flowing humour. They stood in need of a curb to the wild fallies of their exuberant fancy, which Shakspeare here presents them.

It must be confessed, that the actors, termed low comedians, are too guilty of adding to their author's text. Sometimes, indeed it happens, that the wit, or happy imagination, of the actor, will be of service to the situation in which he is placed, and unexpectedly give a relief or embellishment to that which would otherwise be neglected, or perhaps disapproved.

The contrary practice is, however, much more common. Hippisley not seldom in this point offended, Shuter oftener, King rarely, Jonson and Weston scarcely ever ; but Will. Pinkethman, of merry memory, was in such full possession of the galleries, that he would hold discourse with them for several minutes. To fine him for this fault was in vain ; he could not forsake it, and the managers were too generous to curtail him of his income. At length, I was told, he and Wilks came to this whimsical agreement : Pinkey consented, That, whenever he was guilty of corresponding with the gods, he should receive, on his back, three smart strokes of Bob Wilks's cane. — This fine, however, was, I believe, never exacted. — I shall give the reader one specimen of his unseasonable drollery.

In the play of the Recruiting Officer, Wilks was the Captain Plume, and Pinkethman one of the Recruits. The Captain, when he enlisted him, asked his name : instead of answering as he ought, Pinkey replied, ‘ Why ! don’t you know

my

my name, Bob? I thought every fool had known that!' Wilks, in rage, whispered to him the name of the Recruit, Thomas Appletree. The other retorted aloud, ' Thomas Appletree! Thomas Devil! my name is Will. Pinkethman: and, immediately addressing an inhabitant of the upper regions, he said, ' Hark you, friend: don't you know my name?' — ' Yes, Master Pinkey,' said a respondent, ' we know it very well.' The playhouse was now in an uproar; the audience, at first, enjoyed the petulant folly of Pinkethman and the distress of Wilks; but, in the progress of the joke, it grew tiresome, and Pinkey met with his deserts, a very severe reprimand in a hiss; and this mark of displeasure he changed into applause, by crying out, with a countenance as melancholy as he could make it, in a loud nasal twang, *Oof!*
I fear I am wrong!

To the honour of the present race of comic actors, it must be said, that they seldom indulge themselves in adding their own to the author's sense. Men of abilities they generally are; and, as such, often suggest fallies of pleasantry and situations of humour to the authors behind the curtain, and not seldom contribute to the mirth and gaiety of the scene by their ingenuity.

In giving instructions to his own society, there is some delicacy required in the behaviour of the actor, who, in the person of a Prince, takes upon him to censure and reform their errors. Mr. Garrick delivered these theatrical precepts with much force and propriety; but he did not accompany them with the condescending quality expected from the high-bred man of rank. He rather sustained the office of a stage-manager, and consummate master of the art, than that of the generous friend

friend and princely monitor. Mr. Henderson has, in this scene, less of the pedagogue and more of the gentleman.

I D E M.

Horatio, thou art e'en as just a man
As ere my conversation met withal, &c.

The warm and pathetic address of Hamlet to his friend is, I think, not unlike that of Orestes to Pylades in the Electra of Euripides :

Πυλαδη, σε γε δη πρωτον αιδεωπαν εγω
Πιστον νομιζω και φιλον ζενον εμοι, κ. τ. λ.

Thee, O my Pylades, I deem the first
Of men for thy fidelity and friendship,
And my unsever'd comrade !

Wodhull's Translation.

I D E M.

I must be idle.

' If I am observed to converse with you seriously, my plot will be disconcerted ; I must therefore re-assume madness.'

R O S E N C R A U S.

They [the players] stay upon your patience.

' Submissively, or on sufferance, they attend your commands.'

H A M L E T.

Be not you ashamed to shew, and they will tell you what it means.

Mr. Steevens reproves the author, for putting into the mouth of Hamlet unbecoming expressions during

during his personated madness. But it has been noticed, by those who have visited the cells of lunatics, that females, the most remarkable for modesty, have, in their insanity, thrown out very indecent and unbecoming expressions. In her madness, the innocent Ophelia chants scraps of such songs as would not have entered into her mind when in her perfect senses.

O P H E L I A.

You are as good as a *chorus*, my lord.

Shakspeare knew little of the antient *chorus*. What he so terms, of his own, is always in the shape of a prologue. The learned B. Jonson has, in his Catiline, introduced the Ghost of Sylla in a rhyming kind of exordium or prologue; to which he has added four odes, to be sung between the acts, as *chorus*, in various unequal measure.

Milton, in his *chorus* to Samson Agonistes, is the genuine imitator of Æschylus and Sophocles. Mr. Mason has, by his enchanting poetry, in his musical odes to Elfrida and Caractacus, almost surprised the public into a taste for that part of the antient tragedy.

Though it does not become me to determine which of the two champions, for and against the *chorus*, the learned Dr. Hurd and Mrs. Montague, is in the right; yet I cannot help leaning to the opinion of Mr. Colman; who, in his notes to his happy translation of Horace's Art of Poetry, observes, — ‘ That, if a *chorus* be really necessary, our dramas, like those of the antients, should be rendered wholly musical. The dances also will then claim their place, and the pretensions of Vestris and Noverre must be admitted as classical.

classical. Such a spectacle, if not more natural than the modern, would at least be consistent; but, to introduce a groupe of spectatorial actors, some speaking in one part of the drama and singing in another, is as strange and incoherent a medley, and full as unclassical, as the dialogue and airs in the Beggar's Opera.'

H A M L E T.

Begin, murderer; leave thy damnable faces, and begin.

This contains a censure upon the custom of certain actors, who were cast into the parts of conspirators, traitors, and murderers, who used to disguise themselves in large black wigs; and distort their features, in order to appear terrible; in short, to discover that which their art should teach them to conceal. I have seen Hippisley act the first Murderer in Macbeth: his face was made pale with chalk, distinguished with large whiskers, and a long black wig. This custom, of dressing so preposterously the hateful implements of the tragic scene, is now almost worn out.

I D E M.

I could interpret between you and your lover, if I could see the puppets dallying.

That is, ' I could act the part of master of the puppet-show, and interpret both for you and your lover, if I saw the least prelude of amorous inclination.'

I D E M.

For some must laugh, while some must weep;
Thus runs the world away.

In the uttering of this line and a half it was Garrick's constant practice to pull out a white hand-

handkerchief, and, walking about the stage, to twirl it round with vehemence. This action can incur no just censure, except from its constant repetition. He, of all the players I ever saw, gave the greatest variety to action and deportment ; nor could I help wondering, that so great an artist should, in this instance, tie himself down to one particular mode, when his situation would admit of so many. The conforming to an uniform method of action makes the whole appear a lesson got by rote rather than the effort of genuine feeling.

I D E M.

Would not this, sir, and a *forest of feathers*, get me a fellowship in a *cry of players* ?

H O R A T I O.

Half.

H A M L E T.

— A whole one.

The *forest of feathers* alludes to large plumes of feathers which the old actors wore on their heads in characters of heroism and dignity. This practice was adopted at the Restoration, and continued in force till Mr. Garrick's æra of management. His superior taste got rid of the incumbrance.

Cry of players is, as Mr. Steevens observes, a *company of comedians*. The old actors divided their profits into equal or unequal shares, according to their several degrees of merit. Sometimes, indeed, a very indifferent performer, by his talents as a writer, gained an equal, if not a superior, portion of the surplus. It likewise not unfrequently happened, that a man, who had no other

desert

desert than furnishing a large part of the wardrobe, the scenes, and other decorations, claimed a considerable part of the treasure. Tucca, in Ben Jonson's Poetaster, calls one of the lower actors *Three-Shares*.

This custom, of portioning out the income of the theatre into parts, subsisted long amongst the French comedians, and is, I believe, practised to this day. —— Downs, in his Stage-History, inform us, that the principal actors of the king's theatre, in Drury-lane, Hart, Mohun, &c. on an annual division of their profits, gained sometimes 1000l. each.

I D E M.

A very, very, *peacock*.

Notwithstanding the very plausible reading of *paddock*, instead of *peacock*, proposed by Mr. Theobald, I cannot help thinking, with Mr. Pope, that Shakspeare alluded to the well-known fable of the birds, who preferred that vain, gaudy, foolish, bird, the *peacock*, to the eagle, in their choice of a king. The word *paddock*, afterwards introduced by Hamlet in the scene with his mother, I think proves nothing. To enforce his argument of her guilt, and to display the deformity as well as absurdity of her conduct, he there compares his uncle to the most disagreeable and displeasing object in nature.

G U I L D E N S T E R N.

If my duty be too bold, my love is too unmannerly.

This answer to Hamlet's question, of ‘ Why do you go about to recover the wind of me?’ which is not, in my opinion, ludicrous, but ob-

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jurgative, (for he keeps no measures with his old school-fellows,) seems to include a sort of reproach. ‘ If, in delivering the message of the King and Queen, I have shewn too great boldness, my respect to you, in standing out of the way, that you might with more ease receive the flute, will certainly be interpreted ill manners.’ And here I am glad to find my opinion partly confirmed by Mr. Tyrrwhit. But the movement of Guildenstern appeared, to Hamlet, as insidious as the conduct of these courtiers in the second act, when one of them, instead of answering a question directly, says to the other, *What say you?* which is as much as to say, ‘ Shall I speak the truth, or tell a lie?’

K I N G.

For we will fetters put about this *fear*.

Fear is here personified, as in Homer, when it is made the concomitant of other terrible companions of war.

There is, in the Maid’s Tragedy, a passage, where the unhappy Aspasia gives directions to Antiphila to weave, in needlework, a storm and shipwreck; in which the word *fear* is beautifully personified, and to be understood much in the same sense as in Hamlet:

— In this place work a quicksand;
And, over it, a shallow smiling water,
And his ship ploughing it. And then a *fear*:
Do that *fear* to the life, wench.

MAID’S TRAGEDY, ACT II.

I D E M.

Oh! my offence is rank!

The

The King is just come from the representation of the play ; where he has been struck with compunction from viewing the same act represented on the scene which he had himself committed. His coming on with the two courtiers, and the interruption of Polonius, are awkward incumbrances to his situation, and I think unnecessary, as the sending Hamlet to England had been determined by the King in a preceding scene, and Polonius had already told his master he would be attentive to what passed between Hamlet and his mother.

Notwithstanding this admirable soliloquy of the King describes the struggles of conscience without contrition, and a dread of future punishment without remorse or penitence, and which, in my opinion, requires a very judicious speaker, yet the part of the King appears so odious, that the principal actors generally shun it, as the representation of a low and insidious villain, who wants to support his assumed rank with dignity and maintain his usurpation by courage. Yet there are some situations of Claudius worthy the attention of an actor. His behaviour during the acting of the play before him, and the evident signs of guilt which he ought to shew in his countenance, require a skilful exhibition of conscious terror. Whoever is able to do justice to the sentiments of this soliloquy, and paint the horror of guilt resulting from the dread of a future reckoning, will be amply rewarded by his auditors.

Some eminent actors, such as Keen, Quin, and Hulet, have not disdained to represent this character. When Ryan, at Lincoln's-inn-fields theatre, appeared in Hamlet, to give strength to the play, Quin and Walker acted the inferior parts.

parts of the King and Horatio, and retained them from 1719 to 1734.

HAMLET.

And how his audit stands, who knows save heaven?

Hamlet was now confirmed, (by that proof on which he most relied, the signs of guilt in the King's behaviour at the play,) that the vision he had seen was no devil.—Of this he is well satisfied; For he says he will

Take the Ghost's word for a thousand pounds.

That the author should now make him forget what the Ghost had related to him, of his confinement in purgatory, is a little surprising. The whose soliloquy is more reprehensible, perhaps, than any part of Shakspeare's works. The deferring the punishment of the King at his devotions, lest his soul should go to heaven, is not only shocking, but highly improbable; and is, besides, a poor contrivance to delay the catastrophe to the last act. The first actor, who rejected this soliloquy, was Mr. Garrick.

IDE M.

How now? a *rat!* dead for a ducket, dead.

This line has given occasion to an absurd charge of Voltaire against this tragedy.—‘Hamlet,’ says this writer, ‘kills the father of his mistress, on supposition that it was a *rat* which he destroyed.’ Had he read the play, or understood the text if he had read it, he would have known, that Hamlet imagined the person he had killed was the King himself. But this is not the only error into which this great man has fallen respecting this play: The assumed madness of Hamlet he calls real: *Hamlet y devient*

y devient fou dans la seconde acte. The King, Queen, and Hamlet, drink together on the stage. The actors sing together, quarrel, and fight. It is somewhat surprising, that a man, who had been several years in England, and had written letters in our language, could be so grossly mistaken. To suppose him the inventor of these false criminations would be to degrade genius too much. Mrs. Montague has, by an incomparable defence of our author, defeated the weak attempts, of this envious but brilliant Frenchman, to blast the laurels of our great poet.

Q U E E N.

As kill a king?

I cannot, with Mr. Steevens, suppose this interrogation of the Queen as a hint to the auditors that she had no concern in the murder of her husband. The words are absolutely equivocal, and may be a proof of her guilt as well as her innocence. The Ghost had charged her with being won to the lust of his brother and murderer; there he stopped, and, with the most pathetic tenderness, cautions Hamlet not to think of punishing his mother, but to leave her to heaven and her conscience. But there is one passage, in the play acted before the King and Queen, which brings the guilt of murder home to Hamlet's mother. The Player-Queen says, among other professions of inviolable constancy—

In second husband let me be accurst!

None wed the second but who kill'd the first!

These lines we may suppose to be put into the old fable, by Hamlet, on purpose to probe the mind of the Queen; and his immediate reflection on her behaviour plainly proves that they stung her to the quick: ‘ That’s wormwood !’

HAMLET.

— Takes off the rose
From the fair *forehead* of an innocent love,
And sets a blusher there.

I cannot think this passage requires the long and learned note of Mr. Steevens, without which it may very easily be explained.

‘ This infamous act,’ says Hamlet, ‘ deprives the countenance of that modest hue or rosy blush, which becomes the chaste and virtuous matron ; and it places or fixes there a brand of infamy.’ The *forehead*, in this place, stands, *as frons* does in Latin, for the *countenance*. *Fronti nulla fides.*

IDE M.

— Sense sure you have,
Else could you not have motion.

Motion depends on the will of the person who moves. This is sufficient to justify the old reading ; the lowest degree of animal sense is motion, and therefore properly applied to one who is accused of having neither sight or judgment.

IDE M.

— Such a deed
As from the body of contraction plucks
The very soul!

‘ A deed which is like separating the soul from the body, and dissolves that contract which religion and law intended to render indissoluble.’

— Heaven’s face doth glow :
Yea, this solidity and compound mass,
With tristful visage, as against the doom,
Is thought-sick at the act !

• A deed

‘A deed so horrid, that it seemed to forerun the day of judgment, and earth itself to sympathise and feel a sensibility on the occasion.’ Milton, who was a great admirer of our poet, from these lines might impossibly be indebted to Shakspeare for that sublime passage of the earth’s sympathising with Adam and Eve when they ate the forbidden fruit :

Earth felt the wound ; and nature, from her seat,
Sighing through all her works, gave signs of woe
That all was lost !

PARADISE LOST, Book IX.

I D E M.

Look upon this picture and on this.

It has been the constant practice of the stage, ever since the Restoration, for Hamlet, in this scene, to produce from his pocket two pictures in little, of his father and uncle, not much bigger than two large coins or medallions. How the graceful attitude of a man could be given in miniature I cannot conceive.—In the infancy of the stage, we know that our theatres had no moving scenes; nor were they acquainted with them till Betterton brought some from Paris, 1662.—In our author’s time they made use of tapestry; and the figures in tapestry might be of service to the action of the player in the scene between Hamlet and the Queen. ‘But,’ says Downs, ‘Sir William Davenant taught the players the representation of Hamlet as he had seen it before the civil wars.’ But, if the scantiness of decorations compelled the old actors to have recourse to miniature-pictures, why should the play-house continue the practice when it is no longer necessary : when the scene might be shewn to more advantage by two portraits, at length, in different panels

nels of the Queen's closet ? Dr. Armstrong in his sketches, long ago pointed out the supposed absurdity of these hand-pictures. The other mode, of large portraits, would add to the graceful action of the player, in pointing at the figures in the wainscot. He might resume the chair immediately after he had done with the subject, and go on with the expostulation. However this is only a conjecture which I throw out for the consideration of the actors.

I D E M.

Save me and hover o'er me with your wings,
You heavenly guards !

At the appearance of the Ghost, in this scene, Hamlet immediately rises from his seat affrighted; at the same time he contrives to kick down his chair, which, by making a sudden noise, it was imagined would contribute to the perturbation and terror of the incident. But this, in my opinion, is a poor stage-trick, and should be avoided; it tends to make the actor solicitous about a trifle, when more important matter demands his attention.

G H O S T.

Oh ! step between her and her fighting soul.

Here, as in the first act, our author makes the vision overflow with tenderness and sensibility for his unhappy Queen. Shakspere every where shews a genuine respect for the fair sex throughout all his works. In thirty-five plays, which are all that can honestly be attributed to him, there are not above six or seven vicious characters of women. I have, in the life of Massinger, observed, that he likewise dwells with uncommon pleasure on the perfections of the beautiful part of the creation,

tion, and that his numbers flow with surprising harmony whenever they are the subject.

H A M L E T.

My father, in his habit as he liv'd!

A warlike king, such as we are told old Hamlet was, would be dressed as often in armour as in any other habit. The Queen must have often seen him in a military garb; therefore there is no need of Mr. Steevens's new pointing of the line.

I D E M.

And, when you are desirous to be bless'd,
I'll blessing beg of you.

That is: 'When I perceive in you the true signs of Penitence, I shall then, and not till then, desire your prayers for me.'

I D E M.

Unpeg the basket on the house's top;
Let the birds fly, and, like the famous ape,
To try conclusions, in the basket creep,
And break your neck down.

Mr. Warner's note, referring to the story of the jackanapes and the partridges, in a letter of Sir John Suckling, is by no means satisfactory. The author seems rather to allude to some well-known story, or fable, of an ape, who, being near a basket, in some tower, or high place, was curious to see what was in it; he contrived to open it; and, on seeing the birds which were in it fly away, to make experiment, whether he could not do the like, he crept into the basket; and, by his weight, tumbled it down, and broke his neck.

But, let the story be as it will, the meaning of the passage seems plainly to be this: 'Be not, mother,

ther, induced, by any means, to betray my simulation of madness to my uncle ; if you do, he will not only put an end to my life, but he will, from his guilty suspicions, treat you as an accomplice.'

I D E M.

— They must sweep my way,
And marshal me to knavery.

' These men must be the ushers to some vile knavery of my uncle, which will bring on my ruin.' What is farther said, in this place, of Hamlet's just suspicions of his schoolfellows, is preparative to his conduct as related in the fifth act.

This scene is one of the glories of the English stage ; it may challenge a competition with any thing of the kind produced by *haughty Greece or insolent Rome*.

France, in fifty years after the first acting of this play, could not boast of a composition so highly finished. In the first interview between Hamlet and the Ghost, the terrible graces are superior to the tender ; in this, the latter bear away the palm, though it is not absolutely deficient in the former. The argument, in favour of the nuptial bond and against adultery, is conducted with equal force and address. The contrast, between old Hamlet and his brother Claudius, is inimitably touched.— But I shall not dwell upon excellences which could not have escaped any observer.

How Taylor, the original Hamlet, performed it, we can have no trace or idea, except from what Downs has given, in his *Roscius Anglicanus*, which amounts to no more than that Betterton acted it wonderfully from the lessons of Sir William Davenant, who had seen and remembered Taylor.

Hamlet

Hamlet was esteemed, it is said by the same writer, the masterpiece of Betterton. Downs is justified, in this information, by the concurrent testimony of his contemporaries, and especially Sir Richard Steele and Colley Cibber. I have seen a pamphlet, written, above forty years since, by an intelligent man, who greatly extols the performance of Betterton in this last scene, commonly called the closet-scene.

If Addison and Cibber justly blamed Wilks, for his behaviour to the Ghost in the first act, they could not possibly censure his conduct with his mother in the third. His action was indeed a happy mixture of warm indignation, tempered with the most affecting tenderness. His whole deportment was princely and graceful : when he presented the pictures, the reproaches his animation produced were guarded with filial reluctance ; and, when he came to that pathetic expostulation, of

Mother, for love of grace !

there was something in his manner inexpressibly gentle and powerfully persuasive.

To Wilks Milward succeeded. All the surviving spectators of Milward's Prince of Denmark will be pleased to have him recalled to their memory ; for, in his first interview with the Ghost, and in this closet-scene, he was not only an agreeable, but a skilful, actor : his voice was full and musical ; and, in this character, he seemed to forget that love of ranting, which was his singular fault, or, as Shakspeare would express it, his *dram of base* in *acting*.—Hamlet was the last part poor Milward was announced for in the bills ; on his sudden illness, The. Cibber undertook to read it.

What-

Whatever deficiencies might be observed in Wilks and Milward, they were amply supplied by the genius of Garrick. Here he had an ample field to display that fine expression of countenance, energy of speech, and warmth of passion, for which he was so justly admired. To argumentative reproof he gave full vigour; nor was he deficient in those filial regards which a son should feel for a mother unhappily misled. His address to the Ghost was reverentially awful, as well as transcendently moving. His eye, marked with grief and filial love, pursued the melancholy shade to his exit. His recovery from that situation was characteristically striking, and his final exhortation to his mother ardent and pathetic. Except in the delicacy of address to a lady, in which Wilks and Barry excelled all mortals, Garrick was, in this scene, a most perfect Hamlet.

Mr. Sheridan, in several situations of Hamlet's character, was original, and different from all, of his own time, who had preceded him. The applause, conferred on him by many brilliant audiences, will be an authentic testimony of his merit.

Hamlet was not Barry's most happy effort in acting; but, in this scene, he certainly was very pleasing and affecting.

Mr. Smith's endeavours to please, in Hamlet, were crowned with success. He modestly contented himself with following the instructions of his great master, Mr. Garrick; and was always heard with respect and attention.

I have already mentioned Mr. Henderson with that just praise which his great merit deserves. He is accounted, by the critics, one of the most correct and judicious speakers on the stage. His

third-act scene, in Hamlet, is not only judicious, but pathetic.

The part of Hamlet's Mother is a character of dignity, not without a mixture of passion. Though, of late, our principal actresses have rejected Queen Gertrude, yet the skill of a good performer is requisite to fill up many of her theatric situations with propriety. Without a proper support from the Queen, Hamlet's action, in the last scene of the third act, would lose half its force. Lady Slingsby, an actress of merit, was the first Hamlet's Mother, I think, since the Restoration, when Mrs. Betterton acted Ophelia. Mrs. Porter was the Queen-mother of Wilks, and Mrs. Hallam of Ryan.

The excellent performance of this part by Mrs. Pritchard will be the longer remembered, since, as I have observed, the present eminent tragic actresses reject the part, as if it were beneath them. The universal applause she commanded, in this great interview with her son, was thought by her a sufficient compensation for going through various attitudes of less consequence.

Mrs. Pritchard's attention to all the less, and seemingly unimportant, business of the Queen, was so exact, that Hamlet's Mother was esteemed one of her prime characters. Mrs. Porter, though a greater actress in tragedy, did not excel her in Gertrude.

C H A P. XXXVIII.

The King is with the body, &c. explained.—*Fortinbras and Hamlet*.—Market of Man's time.—Slight affronts resented.—*Falkland island*.—*Lucian's Speculantes*.—*Hugger-mugger*.—Keen's majesty.—*Case of Ophelia*.—*Mrs. Cibber*.—*Mrs. Betterton*.—*Mrs. Booth and Mrs. Clive*.—Character of *Laertes*;—closeted by the King.—The Grave-diggers defended, and *Voltaire* censured.—*Reflections on Yorick's skull*.—*Foots*.—*Clod*, the famous court-fool.—*Q. Elizabeth, Archbishop Whitgift, and Dean Perne*.—*Cabe Underhill*.—His character.—Last part.—*Jonson*, the actor; originally a painter.—*Yates*.—*Jemmy Robertson*, of York.—Hamlet's behaviour to *Rosencraus* and *Guildenstern*.—Passive obedience.—*Ostrick* characterized.—Hamlet a liar.—*Laertes base*.—Fat and scant of breath.—Hamlet defended against the attacks of *Mr. Steevens*.—Garrick's alteration of *Hamlet*.—The Grave-diggers restored.—Short character of the play.—*Mr. Kemble*.—Inferior parts in *Hamlet*.

Act IV.

Hamlet, Rosencraus, Guildenstern.

H A M L E T.

The body is with the King, but the King is not with the body.

HAMLET, it should be observed, seizes every opportunity to speak contemptuously of his uncle; and here he readily embraces it, with a witty

witty and sarcastic turn of expression. I cannot think Mr. Steevens's explanation of this passage happy. Hamlet turns quickly, from the body of Polonius, to a severe and pointed reproach on the King: ' My uncle,' says he, ' I grant you, has the *body*, the outside show and pageantry, of a monarch; but he wants the dignity and virtues which constitute true royalty.' What he says, a little after, by calling the King ' a thing of nothing,' confirms me in my opinion.

H A M L E T.

A thing of nothing.

' A thing of nothing,' or a matter of no value, is an expression so common to all times, and, I believe, to all languages, that Mr. Steevens might have spared himself the trouble of quoting half a dozen authorities, from plays, to authenticate it.

I D E M.

I see a cherub that sees them.

' I see a spirit that looks into the bottom of your purpose in sending me to England.'

Scene IV.

H A M L E T.

Good sir, whose powers are these?

This scene, which contains much excellent matter, after having been for a long time disused, was restored to the stage by Mr. Thomas Sheridan.

F O R T I N B R A S.

Claims the conveyance of a promis'd march
Over his kingdom.

That

That is : ‘ Tell the King, that we now claim the performance of his promise ; which is, leave to march, unmolested, an army through his dominions.’

H A M L E T.

Two thousand souls and twenty thousand ducats
Will not debate the question of this straw.

That is : ‘ The contention, about this small spot of ground, will not be settled without a large expence of blood and treasure.’

I D E M.

— — — — — What is man,
If his chief good and *market of his time*
Be but to sleep and feed ?

‘ Market of his time’ means the *chief end of his being*.

Mr. Addison, in his Cato, has improved the thought :

— — — — — But what is life ?
‘Tis not to stalk about, and draw fresh air,
From time to time, and gaze upon the sun.

I D E M.

Such large *discourse*.

Discourse is, perhaps, from the Italian, *discurso*.

I D E M.

— — — — — Rightly to be great,
It not to stir without great argument ;
But greatly to find quarrel in a straw,
When honour’s at the stake.

The slightest affront, given with a formed intention to insult and provoke, has been ever held a sufficient

sufficient cause of resentment.—A case in point is the behaviour of the Spaniards to the English on Falkland-island.

I D E M.

— Fight for a spot
Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause.

Something like this we read in that admirable Dialogue of Lucian, between Mercury and Charon, called Speculantes. ‘ See,’ says Mercury to Charon, ‘ those Argives and Lacedemonians fighting together, and their half-dead general inscribing a trophy with his blood.’—‘ What do they fight for?’ asks Charon.—‘ Why, for the little spot of ground on which they stand!’

Scene V.

H O R A T I O.

Her mood will needs be pitied.

‘ Her insanity demands compassion and relief.’

K I N G.

— We have done but greenly,
In *bugger-mugger* to inter him.

Dr. Johnson deserves commendation for restoring the old text of *bugger-mugger*, instead of *in private*; but surely Mr. Steevens need not have enlarged the margin of the volume, by producing four or five authorities, from old authors, for a word that is still in use amongst the common people.

G E N T L E M A N.

The ratifiers and props of every *ward*.

The explanation of this line, by Dr. Warburton, who connects it with the two preceding lines, seems preferable to any other. The word *ward* is taken from the division of a city into *wards* or *districts* of government.

K I N G.

— Do not fear our person :
 There's such divinity doth hedge a king,
 That treason dares not peep at what it would.

To the action of Keen was given the epithet *majestic*. In person he was tall and athletic : Lu. Du Guernier, in his picture to Addison's Cato, has so represented him.—When he spoke these lines, so commanding were his look and whole deportment, the audience accompanied them always with the loudest applause.

L A E R T E S.

Nature is fine in love ; and, where 'tis so,
 It sends some precious instance of itself
 After the thing it loves.

Ophelia's case was very distressful.—Her love to Hamlet had the sanction of Polonius, with the approbation of the King and Queen. The lover, by mistake, kills the father. This bar, to union with the man she loved, could not be removed. Madness was the natural consequence.—Dr. Johnson's explanation of the passage above cited is very elegant ; but the doctrine it inculcates is, that love refines our natures. So Iago to Roderigo, in Othello, ‘ If thou be’st valiant, as they say, base men, being in love, have then a nobility in their natures more than is native to them.’

O P H E L I A.

There's *rue* for you.

In presenting *rue* to the Queen, Mrs. Cibber pronounced the word *rue* with a particular emphasis, and at the same time looked at her with great expression.

O P H E L I A.

Your may wear your *rue* with a difference.

The meaning I take to be this : ‘ Your majesty had cause, indeed, to mourn for one husband’s death ; but, since you have married another, you may mix sorrow and gladness together emblematically.’

Till the sweet character of Ophelia was personated by Mrs. Cibber, it was not well understood, at least for these last sixty years.—Mrs. Betterton, says Colley Cibber, was much celebrated for her action in Shakspeare’s plays, and Sir William Davenant gave her such an idea of it as he could catch from the boy-Ophelias he had seen before the civil wars.—Mrs. Booth’s figure, voice, and deportment, in this part, raised, in the minds of the spectators, an amiable picture of an innocent, unhappy, maid : but she went no farther. Of Mrs. Clive’s Ophelia I shall only say, that I regret that the first comic actress in the world should so far mistake her talents as to undertake it.

I cannot agree, with an excellent observer, that the distracted Ophelia is a personage of insensibility. She rather resembles that to which she compares Hamlet’s madness, ‘ sweet bells out of tune :’ the sound is still preserved in them, though

irregularly played upon. It is rather, I think, sensibility deranged, and deserted by reason. She seems, at times, to recollect her scattered senses : and throws out, though disorderly, truths, solemn and affecting, in the most pathetic expression.

O P H E L I A.

Lord ! we know what we are, but we cannot tell what we shall be.

No eloquence can paint the distressed and distracted look of Mrs. Cibber, while she uttered this sentence.

No actress has hitherto revived the idea of Mrs. Cibber's Ophelia, except Mrs. Baddeley ; whose pleasing sensibility, melodious voice, and correspondent action, made us less regret the great actress in this part.

L A E R T E S.

And for the purpose I'll anoint my sword.

This unexpected change of disposition in Laertes must have struck every reader of the play. A young man of high breeding, with a noble sense of honour, who, from the warmth of filial piety, was ready to take arms against his sovereign, on a sudden becomes a confederate with a vile plotter to destroy a prince. Shakspeare is generally such a complete master of nature, and so faithful a delineator of character, that we must not hastily condemn him. I am afraid he has trusted more than he ought to the readers or spectators sagacity.

Laertes had been closeted by the usurper, who had doubtless thrown as much odium as he could upon his nephew ; he would not inform him that Hamlet had by chance or mistake put an end to his

his father's life, but rather that he had dispatched him by an act of violence or treachery. How far this supposition may justify our author I know not ; but surely, if he had produced, on the stage, such a conversation between the King and Laertes as I have suggested, it would perhaps have alleviated the guilt of the latter.

The fourth act of Hamlet has been censured, by some critics, as much inferior to the three preceding acts. If we should grant that, yet it is certainly not without its merit. Laertes, whom Polonius and the King had given leave to travel to France in the first act, returns in the fourth; and, finding his father dead, and no authentic relation to be obtained in what manner he died, from a spirit of resentment, he raises a tumult in the palace.—The madness of Ophelia is a beautiful dramatic incident, and will alone make that part of the play very interesting.—Laertes is at first rash and violent ; and soon after becomes an associate in villainous practices, for which I have endeavoured, in some sort, to account. The act closes with an affecting relation of Ophelia's death, which contributes to the fixing Laertes in his resolution to destroy Hamlet by any means.

Act V.

The Grave-diggers.

The making a grave upon the stage, and the dialogue of the Grave-diggers, Voltaire censures as the most absurd violation of all dramatic rules. And indeed, were the scene to be weighed in Aristotle's scales, or finally discussed by the French writers, who are always chewing the husks of the Greek

Greek and Roman critics, much could not be said in behalf of our author. But Shakspeare was a man to whom Aristotle would have fallen down and worshipped, as the author of the Essay on Falstaff has pleasantly said.

Candid foreigners will be pleased to reflect, that, when this man wrote, the English stage was in its infancy ; that plays, written according to time, place, and action, were then almost unknown ; and writers, who had the skill to combine the unities, had little else to recommend them to their audiences.

The *medium*, through which human wit and moral truth are to be conveyed, is surely not to be so much considered as these qualities themselves. To see a grave opened, and the scalps, of those who had been buried in the church-yard, thrown wantonly about, must excite reflections to abate our pride and strengthen our humanity. This doctrine Hamlet himself holds forth to us : ‘ Did these bones cost no more than to play at loggats with them ? Mine ache to think of them.’

The moral and pathetic reflections, on the skull of Yorick, are, in my opinion, a compensation for all the oddities, or, if the critics please, the absurdities, of this extraordinary scene. Should it be possible, some twenty years hence, for an acquaintance to discover the skull of an eminent wit, who had, like Yorick, ‘ set the table in a roar ;’ — a *Foote*, perhaps ;—would not some such sentiments, as those uttered by Hamlet on the king’s jester, find their way from the mind of the observer ? How would he moralise, and compare present deformity with past gaiety !

It is very probable, that the Yorick here described was one of the court-fools hired to divert the

the leisure-hours of Queen Elizabeth. And it is most likely that our author celebrates the famous Clod, who died some time before the accession of K. James.

Clod was a clown of uncommon wit and ready observation. Fuller records a jest of his, which, it was said, proved fatal to Dean Perne, who, in the space of twelve years, had changed his religion four times. Queen Elizabeth, in company with Archbishop Whitgift, Dean Perne, and her jester, Clod, was desirous to go abroad on a wet day. Clod used the following argument to prevent her majesty from going out: ‘Heaven,’ says he, ‘madam, dissuades you, for it is cold and wet; and earth dissuades you, for it is moist and dirty. Heaven dissuades you, too, by this heavenly man, Archbishop Whitgift; and earth dissuades you,—your fool, Clod, such a lump of clay as myself. And, if neither will prevail with you, *here is one that is neither heaven nor earth, but hangs between both*,—Dr. Perne; and he also dissuades you.’

Augustine Sly, Tarleton, Kempe, or some old actor of the comic cast, was the original Gravedigger. Cabe Underhill, a comedian, whom Sir William Davenant pronounced to be one of the truest players for humour he ever saw, acted this part forty years successively. Underhill was a jolly and droll companion, who divided his gay hours between Bacchus and Venus with no little ardour; if we may believe such historians as Tom Brown. Tom, I think, makes Underhill one of the gill-drinkers of his time; men who resorted to taverns, in the middle of the day, under pretence of drinking Bristol milk (for so good sherry was then called) to whet their appetites, where they indulged themselves too often in ebriety. Underhill

acted

acted till he was past eighty. He was so excellent in the part of Trinculo, in the *Tempest*, that he was called Prince Trinculo. He had an admirable vein of pleasantry, and told his lively stories, says Brown, with a bewitching smile. The same author says, he was so afflicted with the gout, that he prayed one minute and cursed the other. His shambling gait in his old age, was no hindrance to his acting particular parts. He retired from the theatre in 1703. Some years before he died, he solicited a benefit, which was recommended to the public by the kind-hearted Steele. The part he chose was the Grave-digger in *Hamlet*; but Cabe was so unlike his former self, that he appeared the ghost of what he had been, and was dismissed with compassion. Colley Cibber, who, in his admirable account of the old actors, has spoken at large of Underhill's merits, says he died, about four or five years afterwards, a pensioner of Sir Richard Steele and the players who obtained a patent from George I.

That chaste copier of nature, B. Jonson, the comedian, for above forty years, gave a true picture of an arch clown in the *Grave-digger*. His jokes and repartees had a strong effect from his seeming insensibility of their force. His large speaking blue eyes he fixed steadily on the person to whom he spoke, and was never known to have wandered from the stage to any part of the theatre. Jonson was the Hemskirk or D. Teniers of the theatre; the honest Dutch painter who contents himself with giving a portrait of mere nature. I should have observed, that Jonson was originally a painter by profession.

Next to this excellent man, Mr. Yates must be placed. In manner they strongly resembled each other.

other. They were disciples of the same school.—Nature was their guide, and to her alone they paid their devotion.

Parsons and Quick are actors born to relax the muscles and set mankind a tittering. They are equally happy in the Grave-digger, but with more heightening than the two former. Edwin is chaster in his outline than both, for he does not colour so warmly.

To rank a country actor with these gentlemen of the established London theatres may seem bold and unprecedented; but I am not afraid to name, among men of comic genius, Mr. James Robertson, of York; a man, like Yorick, *of infinite wit and of most excellent fancy*. What gentleman, of the county of York, does not know Jemmy Robertson? What critic so sour as not to be pleased with his fallies of humour, whether his own or faithfully given from his original author on the stage? His being a very pleasing actor, and a lively companion, forms but a small part of his character.—He is respected for merit of a more durable kind: for his honesty, worth, and friendly disposition.

Scene II.

Hamlet and Horatio.

H A M L E T.

As our *statists* do.

Mr. Steevens rightly observes, that *statists* means *statesmen*. Here also it comprehends all men of birth, rank, and fashion; all fine gentlemen, who, from affectation, thought it an indignity to their quality to write a plain and legible hand.

I D E M.

Doth by their insinuation grow.

Hamlet is here accounting for his behaviour to Rosencraus and Guildenstern, whose fate, he says, was owing to their own conduct. If we should not agree, with Dr. Warburton, that these men corruptly insinuated themselves into the service of Hamlet, yet we must own that they were very ready and officious instruments of the King. And, although it does not appear, from the context, that they knew the contents of their commission, ‘to destroy the prince,’ yet I believe the author punishes them, as well as Polonius, for being over busy, and thrusting themselves into any employment, without enquiring whether it was right or wrong, just or unjust. No time was more infamous, for gross flattery to the prince, than the reigns of Elizabeth and of James I. This our author knew ; and this was one mark of *the age and body of the time*, which his manly nature despised and wished to remove.

I D E M.

————— Is’t not to be damn’d,
To let this canker of our nature come
To farther evil ?

That is, : ‘Would it not be an unpardonable crime, to suffer this villain, the destroyer of the human species, to proceed in his wickedness, and go on, unpunished, from crime to crime ?’

The advocates for passive and unlimited obedience will on no account permit resistance to authority.—What?’ you will say, ‘on no account whatever?’—‘O yes ! in the case of lawful succession, where that is interrupted by violence or treachery, as in the case of Hamlet : there, indeed, the

the usurper may be destroyed, by superior power or wily stratagem.'—So then, it seems, from this mode of arguing, that the interest of one man and his family is of more importance to society than that of millions!

I D E M.

The more *fond* and winnowed opinions.

I think nothing can be more clear than that Shakspeare means, by this expression, that such fellows as Ostrick, by acquiring a little fashionable jargon, with a considerable stock of impudence, contrive to pass, upon men of the most approved judgment, for complete courtiers.—To impose their trash upon *fond*, or *foolish*, people, could be no matter of surprise. It is very probable, that, instead of *fond*, the author wrote *found*.

I D E M:

Give me your pardon, sir.

No part of this speech of Hamlet should be spoken but that which Mr. Steevens has restored, beginning with—

Sir, in this audience,—

and so to the end. To the rest Hamlet gives the lie most shamefully.

L A E R T E S.

I am satisfied in nature.

Laertes determined to act treacherously, and therefore seems puzzled to return a proper answer to Hamlet's fair address and noble apology. To that, I think, we must place his referring the matter in dispute to able judges of affronts. His offering to receive his antagonist's proffered love as love,

and

and protesting not to wrong it, is as infamous as Hamlet's attributing his violent behaviour at Ophelia's grave to his madness.

QUEEN.

He is fat and scant of breath.

In a note to this passage, Mr. Steevens says, that John Lowin, who was the original Falstaff, was no less celebrated for his Henry VIII. and Hamlet. Mr. Steevens had forgotten, in a note of his on Henry IV. that Lowin had ever acted Falstaff: for the letters *Old*, placed to a speech of that character, he, rather than suppose it to stand for *Oldcastle*, which, I believe, was originally intended, would insinuate, they might be the first letters of the actor's name who played Falstaff: this it is to support an hypothesis at all events.—I believe that Betterton, who was an unlimited stage-genius, was the only actor that ever represented the three parts of Hamlet, Falstaff, and Harry VIII. How Lowin could be said to have acted Hamlet is somewhat surprising, as he was celebrated chiefly for parts of humour.* Taylor is generally allowed to be the original Hamlet; and, at the time these words, of 'fat and scant of breath,' were put in the Queen's mouth, he might have been plumper, in person, than the author wished he should be for the actor of young Hamlet.

LAERTES.

— Mine and my father's death
Come not on thee.

Laertes

* That Lowin sometimes acted tragic characters cannot be denied.—He played Domitian in the Roman Actor, and Aubrey in Rollo, when the actors were interrupted by the soldiers, at Holland-House.

Laertes had justly purchased his own death by his treacherous conduct; Hamlet could have brought no guilt on his head on that score. Had he said, indeed,—

— My father's and my sister's death
Come not on thee, —

he would have been more consistent. Laertes is not a favourite with the audience or the actors.

H O R A T I O.

Now cracks a noble heart.

Hamlet is not a character for imitation; there are many features of it that are disagreeable. Notwithstanding his apparent blemishes, I do not think that he is so deformed as Mr. Steevens has represented him. Aaron Hill had, above forty years ago, in a paper called the *Prompter*, observed, that, besides Hamlet's assumed insanity, there was in him a melancholy, which bordered on madness, arising from his peculiar situation. But surely Hamlet did not come, as Mr. Steevens says, to disturb the funeral of Ophelia; for, till Laertes called the dead body his sister, he knew not whose grave was before him. Nor did he manifest the least sign of wrath, till Laertes bestowed a more than tenfold curse upon him. His jumping into the grave, when unexpectedly provoked, may be pardoned. Laertes seized him by the throat; and even then, instead of returning violence for violence, Hamlet begs him to desist. The madness of Ophelia is no farther to be charged to his account than as the unhappy consequence of a precipitant and mistaken action.

It is evident that Hamlet considered Rosencraus and Guildenstern as the King's accomplices and instruments; nor indeed can we absolve them of that guilt.

guilt. They were the cabinet-counsellors of a villain and a murderer ; and, though they were strangers to *all* his guilt, it is not improbable that they were acquainted with the secret of their commission. They were witnesses of the King's anxiety at and after the play which was acted before him ; and, when he told them, *he liked him not*, they saw no apparent reason for his saying so, except Hamlet's behaviour at the play, which, however frolicsome it might be, was not surely wicked. Upon a mature inspection of their conduct through the play, they must be stigmatised with the brand of willing spies upon a prince, their quondam school-fellow, whose undoubted title to the crown they well knew, and of whose wrongs they had not any feeling. In short, to sum up their character in a few words, they were ready to comply with any command, provided they acquired, by their compliance, honour and advantage.

Mr. Garrick, about eight or nine years since, offered the public an amendment of Shakspeare's Hamlet. The respect, which the public owed to so eminent a genius, disposed them to receive his alterations favourably. The first act, which, in my opinion, the author's genius carries on with wonderful rapidity, he had observed was immoderately long ; for this reason he divided it into two, the first ending with Hamlet's determined resolution to watch, with Horatio and Marcellus, in expectation of seeing the ghost of his father. In consequence of this arrangement, the old third act was extended to the fourth. Little or no change, in language or scenery, was attempted till the fifth act, in which Laertes arrives and Ophelia is distracted, as in the old play. The plotting-scenes, between the King and Laertes, to destroy Hamlet, were entirely changed,

changed, and the character of Laertes rendered more estimable. Hamlet, having escaped from Rosencraus and Guildenstern, returns with a firm resolution to avenge the death of his father. The Grave-diggers were absolutely thrown out of the play. The audience were not informed of the fate of Ophelia; and the Queen, instead of being poisoned on the stage, was led from her seat, and said to be in a state of insanity, owing to her sense of guilt. When Hamlet attacks the King, he draws his sword and defends himself, and is killed in the encounter. Laertes and Hamlet die of their mutual wounds.

To such material changes, in this favourite tragedy, the audience submitted during the life of the alterer; but they did not approve what they barely endured. The scenes and characters of Shakspeare, with all their blemishes, will not bear radical or violent alteration. The author had drawn Claudio a coward, as well as a villain and usurper; and this strong check upon guilt and stigma upon wickedness ought by no means to be removed. Garrick, if I remember right, used to say, that, before his alteration of Hamlet, the King used to be stuck like a pig on the stage: but by giving the murderer courage, this great actor did not see that he lessened the meanness of his character, which the author takes care to inculcate throughout the play. The brave villain, like Rich. III. we justly hate, but we cannot despise him. Why the fate of Ophelia should be left uncertain, as well as that of the Queen, I cannot conceive. But the spectators of Hamlet would not part with their old friends, the Grave-diggers. The people soon called for Hamlet as it had been acted from time immemorial.

The

The dialogue of this tragedy approaches very near to the conversation of the present times. Many of the scenes display wit as brilliant as that of Congreve, with the ease and familiarity of Vanbrugh. The argument is often profound, and the satire just and poignant. *The Cid* was not more a favourite with the French nation than *Hamlet* with ours. The great number of proverbial expressions, taken from *Hamlet*, which are brought into the senate, uttered at the bar, and retailed and applied in almost every company, is a certain proof, that this play has not only been acted more frequently than others, but that the sentiments and maxims it contains have made a lasting impression on its spectators. Dr Johnson's general review, at the close of his remarks on *Hamlet*, is accurate, elegant and instructive.

It is obvious to me, that Shakspeare, in the celebrated soliloquy on a future state, piously intended a dissuasive from self-murder.

Since my remarks on this tragedy went to the press, I have seen a new *Hamlet*, in the person of Mr. Kemble, brother to Mrs. Siddons. I congratulate the public on the prospect of much rational entertainment, from the joint efforts of two persons of uncommon genius in the art which they profess.

Though, in drawing the outline of *Hamlet*, it was scarcely possible Mr. Kemble should differ from preceding actors, yet his particular emphases, pauses, and other novelties in acting, have surprised the public and divided the critics; some of whom greatly censure, while others as warmly extol, his peculiarities.

The audience will, in general, consider every thing that is unusual with a jealous eye, and perhaps with some reason; at the same time, men of candour

dour will reflect, that the judicious actor must have considered every material line of his part, every action and attitude, with more attention than the spectator can, who balances in his mind one player with another, and determines the merit of the performer more from comparison than mature deliberation.

If Booth and Garrick deserved much praise for discovering beauties which had long lain hid, in some capital parts,—why should not we encourage the industry of every young stage-adventurer, who, by a deep search into character, finds out new methods of pleasing, provided they are not inconsistent with the author's intention?

What the actor is chiefly to guard against, in this case, is too much refinement; to beware lest a passion for novelty mislead him into overstrained niceties.

Mr. Kemble's pauses are, I believe, very judicious, though to many they appeared long. The actor must take into the account the tone of the audience; for the rule of acting, in conformity to the rule of speaking, must not contradict the general sense. A player cannot, with safety to himself, affect to appear wiser than his judges.

As I do not propose to go through an examen of Mr. Kemble's Hamlet, I shall add but little more on the subject.

In the impasioned scene, between Hamlet and his Mother, in the third act, Kemble's emphasis and action, however different from those of all former Hamlets we have seen, bore the genuine marks of solid judgment and exquisite taste. I never saw an audience more deeply affected, or more generously grateful to the actor who had so highly raised their passions.

Mr. Kemble is tall and well made ; his countenance expressive, his voice strong and flexible, his action and deportment animated and graceful. His salutations are said by some to be too much studied, and, in the scene of fencing, too formal and ceremonious. I will not pretend to determine, whether trials of skill and the exercise with foils, between princes and men of high rank, and those of inferior condition, are attended with the same forms ; but shall observe, that, though we are taught our outward behaviour by the dancing-master, the salute and address of the well-bred man will always distinguish him from his teacher.

As the managers of both theatres have seemed to try their strength lately in the play of Hamlet, I shall take some notice of a few under parts in the play.—Horatio is an excellent character of friendship, and sits very becomingly on my old acquaintance, Mr. Thomas Hull, the friend of Shenstone and the approved speaker of Mason. Mr. Whitfield has lately succeeded Mr. Hull, at Covent-garden, in Horatio ; and, in action and speech is decently becoming. At Drury-lane, Mr. Farren, a young actor of merit, does justice to this amiable part. He does not endeavour to make more of his situations in the scene than he ought ; he observes a proper subordination, and keeps in mind the advice of the poet, not to *o'erstep the modesty of nature*. The kingly behaviour of Clarke seems more important than the majesty of Packer, who always speaks sense but not with sufficient force. The Grave-diggers, Parsons and Quick, are admirably matched. Though I do not dislike Mrs. Hopkins in the Queen, yet I would rather see her in Mrs. Heidelberg ; her excellence is in comedy. Mrs. Inchbald's figure is pleasing, and her judgment stronger than her power of utterance.

Dryden.

C H A P. XXXIX.

The Restoration opens the theatres.—King's and Duke of York's companies.—Shakspeare less valued than Fletcher and Jonson.—Heroic tragedy.—Dryden's defence of it.—Maximin's defiance of the gods.—Aurengzebe, Morat.—Kynaston and Booth.—Celebrated lines on the vicissitudes of life, with an answer.—Dryden forsakes riming tragedy.—His All for Love.—The true language of tragedy.—Troilus and Cressida;—when revived.—Old authors censured.—Charles II. and his courtiers.—Buckingham, Rochester, and Dorset.—Mermaid, the Devil, Roebuck, &c.—Beef-steak club.—John Beard.—Low company.—Mr. Wolsey and Rochester's Valentinian.—Poets compared.—Their characters of gentlemen.—Laziness or inability in dramatists.—Sir George Etheridge.—Dorimant.—Duke of Dorset.—Jeremy Collier and Dryden.—Licentious language of tragedy.—Dryden's defence of himself.—His death.

SOON after the Restoration of Charles II. the doors of the theatre, which had been shut for twenty years, were thrown open. The king and the duke of York formed two separate companies of comedians, who were honoured with the title of his majesty's servants. The court directed the general taste, and took the lead in all public diversions, more especially in the amusements of the stage.

In looking over the fragment of Downes, I see little respect paid to Shakspeare, much to Beaumont and Fletcher,

Fletcher, and still more to Ben Jonson, in proportion to the number of his plays. Hart and Mohun, the managers of the king's theatre, revived only three of Shakspeare's plays; and Davenant, at the duke's house, about five. But, indeed, a regard for the plays of the last age, as they were then called, was swallowed up in a passion for new-fangled compositions. Heroic tragedies in rime, fraught with bombastic diction and extravagant sentiment, and witty comedies, abounding with smart repartee and loose action, were the immediate successors of the old drama, which was founded on nature; where the dialogue was formed from genuine manners, the passions arose from character and incident, and the catastrophe was closed with an instructive moral. With much wit, and plausible argument, Dryden has endeavoured to vindicate the unnatural flights of his Almanzor and Almahide, of Tyrannic Love, and others of his riming tragedies: but, whatever beauties of imagination, sentiment, with harmony of numbers, they may contain, no man will sit down to read them, at this day, without blending laughter and contempt with esteem and admiration. Long quotations, to prove what is so generally known, would be impertinent. I shall content myself to produce a singular instance of ranting blasphemy, for such it was in the mouth of Maximin, from the last act of *Tyrannic Love*:

What had the gods to do with me or mine !
 Did I molest your heaven !———
 Why should you, then, make Maximin your foe,
 Who paid you tribute which he need not do !
 Your altars I with smoke of gum did crown,
 For which you lean'd your hungry nostrils down ;
 All daily gaping for my incense there,
 More than your sun could draw you in a year.

And you for this these plagues on me have sent:
 But, by the gods,—by Maximin I meant,—
 Henceforth I and my world
 Hostility with you and yours declare :—
 Look to it, gods! for you th'aggressors are.
 Keep you your rain and sunshine in your skies,
 And I'll keep back my flame and sacrifice.
 Your trade of heav'n shall soon be at a stand,
 And all your goods lie heavy on your hand.

An audience, who could bear such rants as this, and relish the following scene with Placidius, who stabs the Emperor, and is, in his turn, stabbed by him, must have had a very particular taste for bombast in words and absurdity in action. Such auditors must have been very unqualified judges of Shakspere, Jonson, and Fletcher.

Dryden's last and most perfect tragedy in rime was *Aurengzebe*. In this play, the passions are strongly depicted, the characters well discriminated, and the diction more familiar and dramatic, than in any of his preceding pieces. Hart and Mohun greatly distinguished themselves in the characters of *Aurengzebe* and the old Emperor. Mrs. Marshall was admired in *Nourmahul*; and Kyaston has been much extolled, by Cibber, for his happy expression of the arrogant and savage fierceness in *Morat*.—‘ Booth, in some part of this character,’ says the same critical historian, ‘ was too tame, from an apprehension of raising the mirth of the audience improperly.’

Though I pay great deference to Cibber’s judgment, yet I am not sure whether Booth was not in the right. . And I cannot help approving the answer, which this actor gave to one who told him he was surprised that he neglected to give a spirited turn to the passage in question :

NOURMAHUL.

'Twill not be safe to let him live an hour.

MORAT.

I'll do't to shew my arbitrary power.

‘Sir,’ said Booth, ‘it was not through negligence, but by design, that I gave no spirit to that ludicrous bounce of Morat. I know very well, that a laugh of approbation may be obtained from the understanding few ; but there is nothing more dangerous than exciting the laugh of simpletons, who know not where to stop. The majority is not the wisest part of the audience ; and, for that reason, I will run no hazard.’*

The court greatly encouraged the play of Aurengzebe. The author tells us, in his dedication, that Charles II. altered an incident in the plot, and pronounced it to be the best of all Dryden’s tragedies. It was revived at Drury-lane about the year 1726, with the public approbation : the old Emperor, Mills ; Wilks, Aurengzebe ; Booth, Morat ; Indiana, Mrs. Oldfield ; Nourmahul, Mrs. Porter ; Melesinda, the first wife of Theophilus Cibber, a very pleasing actress, in person agreeable, and in private life unblemished. She died in 1733.

In this tragedy, Aurengzebe’s complaint, of the vicissitudes and disappointments of life, is forcibly described and beautifully varied. It is still repeated by all lovers of poetry :

When I consider life, 'tis all a cheat ;
Yet, fool'd with hope, men favour the deceit ;
Trust on, in hopes tomorrow will repay :
Tomorrow's falser than the former day ;

* Life of Booth, by Th. Cibber.

Lies more ; and, when it says we shall be bless'd
 With some new joys, cuts off what we possess'd.
 Strange cozenage ! None would live past years again,
 Yet all hope pleasure from what yet remain ;
 And from the dregs of life hope to receive
 What the first sprightly runnings cannot give.
 I'm tir'd with waiting for this chemic gold,
 Which fools us young and beggars us when old !

In the judgment of Addison,* these are the best lines in the play. But the reply of Nourmahul, which contains a very full and pertinent answer to Aurengzebe, I never heard any body mention except Dr. Johnson :

N O U R M A H U L.

'Tis not for nothing that we life pursue :
 It pays our hopes with something that is new.
 Each day's a mistress unenjoy'd before ;
 Like travellers, we are pleas'd with seeing more.
 Did you but know what joys your way attend,
 You would not hurry to your journey's end.

But, notwithstanding Dryden had exerted all his strength to excel in this species of riming tragedy, and had defended it very ably in his excellent Essay on dramatic Poetry, he at last grew tired of his bells, and wished to be a riming packhorse no longer. This he confesses in the prologue to this very play :

But he has now another taste of wit ;
 And, to confess a truth, though out of time,
 Grows weary of his long-lov'd mistress, rhyme.

Having seen, in all probability, those eminent actors, Hart and Mohun, in the much-admired scene of contention in the fourth act of Julius Cæsar,

* Spectator.

Cæsar, he breaks out, in the same prologue, into a generous confession of Shakspeare's superiority :

But, spite of all his pride, a secret shame
Invades his breast at Shakspeare's sacred name !
And, when he hears his godlike Romans rage,
He, in a just despair, would quit the stage,

Two years after Aurengzebe had been acted, Dryden brought to the stage his All for Love ; which is, I think, the first play, after the Restoration, in which was revived the true dramatic style.

The scene between Antony and Ventidius, in the first act of this play, is written in such colloquial language as might be spoken by the humblest and the most exalted characters :

A N T O N Y.

I would be private : leave me.

V E N T I D I U S.

——— Sir, I love you,
And therefore will not leave you.

A N T O N Y.

——— Actium, Actium, oh !

V E N T I D I U S.

It fits too near you.

A N T O N Y.

Here, here, it lies ! a lump of lead by day ;
And, in my short, distracted, nightly slumbers,
The hag that rides me in my dreams !

V E N T I D I U S.

Cut with it ; give it vent.

A N T O N Y.

A N T O N Y.

 Urge not my shame.

I lost a battle !

V E N T I D I U S.

So has Julius done.

A N T O N Y.

Thou favour'st me, and speak'st not half thou think'st :
 For Julius fought it out, and lost it fairly ;
 But Antony —————

V E N T I D I U S.

 Nay, stop not.

This is the true language of nature, and of such passion as is congenial to the breast of every man. In this interview, of Antony and his General, the poet seems to have exhausted his strength : the rest of the play, though not carelessly written, is much inferior to this noble outset.

In a year or two after, Dryden gave a fresh proof of his veneration for Shakspeare, by reviving his *Troilus and Cressida* with considerable alterations and improvements. The noble scene, between Troilus and Hector, in the third act, is the invention of the reviver, and written in emulation of the quarrel between Brutus and Cassius in *Julius Cæsar*. This play was revived by Rich, at Covent-garden, in 1734. Walker acted Hector with his usual spirit and animated action ; Troilus fell to Ryan's share ; Quin was esteemed an admirable Thersites ; and Hippesley excited much mirth in Pandarus. Mrs. Buchanan, a very fine

woman and a pleasing actress, who died soon after in childbed, was the Cressida. Mr. Lacy, late manager of Drury-lane, acted Agamemnon; and Tom Chapman pleased himself with the obstreperous and discordant utterance of Diomed's passion for Cressida.

Dryden, at the same time that he justified the new species of heroic plays in rime, boldly attacked the comedies of the former age. The poets, in the reigns of Elizabeth and James, were, it seems, very low in their humour, and dull and unrefined in their dialogue. They were not so witty and smart in their repartees as the dramatists of their own times. Nay, he boasts that the ladies and gentlemen in his days spoke more wit in conversation than the old dramatists in their plays. This superiority, in elegance of style, Dryden attributes to the influence of the court, and more particularly to the authority of Charles himself. The king had, indeed, by his exile, gained an education which few other princes could obtain. His misfortunes were, in this respect, of service to him. By them he was obliged to converse with different ranks of men; and this contributed to store his mind with knowledge, and soften his manners. He was universally said to be the best-bred man in his dominions. With scarcely any virtues, he had many amiable qualities; his affability and condescension were the charms, which, like a veil, covered the worst part of his character. But Charles contributed, more than any of his courtiers, to plunge the nation into vice and profligacy. During his whole reign, of twenty-four years, the kingdom was in a state of dissipation and ebriety; from which neither the plague in

1665, nor the dreadful fire of London the year after, nor two disastrous Dutch wars, with an unfortunate conspiracy against the public tranquillity, called the popish plot, could rouse them. The two choice favourites of Charles were the witty but infamous Duke of Buckingham, and the lively but abandoned Rochester. It is true, he courted the friendship of all the wits of his time, and particularly the amiable Lord Dorset; but he, observing the king to have no real integrity or worth, honestly rejected the friendship of a man, whom, in his heart, he despised.

It is pleasant to hear Dryden and others very gravely assure us, that it was utterly impossible that the characters of our old poets could talk like gentlemen, because the authors themselves kept low company. The Mermaid, the Devil, and the Boar, it seems, did not receive such pleasant and witty fellows, in the reign of Queen Bess or of James I. as those who frequented the Royal Oak, the Mitre, and the Roebuck, in the days of Charles II. Beaumont, who, I believe, was no ill judge of mirth and good company, in an epistle to Ben Jonson, talks with rapture of the rich banquet of wit and admirable conversation which they had enjoyed at the Mermaid. Nor can I think so meanly of Ben Jonson's club, at the Devil, as Dryden affects to do: that society could never be contemptible which had Ben at the head of it, with Shakspere, Fletcher, and Beaumont, his associates; who were occasionally joined by Selden, Martin, Morley, afterwards Bishop of Winchester, Edmund Waller, and others of equal eminence. The beef-steak club, with their jolly president, John Beard, is surely one of the most respectable assemblies of jovial and agreeable com-

panions in this metropolis ; but I believe their good sense will hinder them from claiming a monopoly of cheerfulness ; they will not say that their predecessors were dull blockheads, because they are dead, and they themselves are alive and merry : *Vixere fortis ante Agamemnona.*

I have said, that the two dearest companions of Charles were Villiers Duke of Buckingham and Wilmot Earl of Rochester : the latter confessed, to Dr. Burnet, that, for five years successively, he had been in a state of ebriety ; and the former, notwithstanding his high rank in life and uncommon vein of wit, became at last so odious for his vices, that his company was at length as much shunned as it had been before sought after and courted. In the preface to an edition of Valentinian, altered from Fletcher by Rochester, Mr. Wolsley, the editor, reproaches the original writer for keeping low company — Could he possibly associate with men of worse principles, more debauched, and more meanly dissipated, than his friend, the earl ? These blessed exemplars of courtly gallantry and fashionable wit, to whom no man in his proper senses could be a companion, were the bright meteors of a giddy age ; and such as Dryden would oppose to the inferior society which Jonson and Shakspeare were reduced to the necessity of meeting. It is true, these antiquated men wanted that which the others enjoyed in a high degree, a relish for blasphemy and profaneness,* with a sovereign contempt for all order and decency. Of all their vices, ebriety seems to have been the most innocent.

The

* If the reader has an inclination to be acquainted with the wit and frolics of this sort of gentlemen, let him turn to honest Astony Wood's Diary of his Life, and read the history of a merry bout at the Cock in Bow-street : p. 187.

The best method, of trying the intrinsic merit of contending genius, is to compare the different compositions of each. Let me ask, Whether the gentlemen, in the comedies of our old bards, Shakspere, Jonson, and Fletcher, are not as replete with wit, and as free from low vulgarity, as those of Dryden, Wycherly, and Otway? Can they honestly place their Wildbloods, Rodophils, Woodalls, Horners, Courtines, and Beaugards, in competition with the Mercutio and Benedic of Shakspere, the Valentine and Loveless of Fletcher, or the Truewits and Clerimonts of B. Jonson? Dryden's contempt of Mercutio is a severe censure on his want of attention to that admirable character.

The only dramatic writer, in a'l Charles's reign, who wrote with some decency of manners and modesty of language, was Sir George Ethridge. His Man of Mode is the original of that species of dramatic writing called genteel comedy. The second Duke of Dorset assured a gentleman, as greatly esteemed for his learning and abilities as his humanity and integrity,* that Dorimant was formed from two originals: his father, the witty Earl of Dorset, and Wilmot Earl of Rochester. This character is properly the first fine gentleman of the English stage; a more gay and spirited man of pleasure has not been drawn since, unless we except the Sir Harry Wildair of Farquhar.

But the poets of Charles's days, either from idleness or want of ability, deprived the stage of that noble ornament of the comic muse, the poetic style, which was the growth of our country, and equally unknown to the Greeks and Romans as to

cur

* Mr. Thomas Sheridan.

our neighbours, the French. It is true, as Mr. Seward very judiciously observes, ‘ that, although the Greeks did not wholly deprive comedy of metre, they left it not the shadow of poetic diction or sentiment. But the Britons not only retained metre in their comedy, but also the strength and nerves of poetry ; which,’ says the same writer, ‘ was a good deal owing to our blank verse ; which, at the same time that it is capable of the highest sublimity, the most extensive and noblest harmony of tragic and epic, yet, when used familiarly, is so near the *sermo pedestris*, so easy and natural, as to be well adapted to the drollest comic dialogue.’*

Our dramatic poets, though unwilling to reform themselves, at last found, in Collier, a severe, but just, corrector of their indecencies and blasphemy. The physic he administered was so powerful, that a sudden and almost effectual reformation took place. Dryden himself, who seldom gave up an argument to his adversary, shrank from the charge and pleaded guilty. The city of London was under particular obligations to this satirical critic ; for a citizen, and especially an alderman, was sure to be the poet’s game ; he was at once dubbed a wittol and a cuckold. I believe, since Collier’s book was published, our magistrates of London have pretty much escaped the ridicule of theatrical horns — But Dryden, though he owned his guilt in very plain terms, would not quit the field without the throwing a few stones at his monitor. He says, I think, with justice, that Collier was too much given to horse-play in his raillery ; for his wit was blunt, though severe ; and his style, though forcible was coarse. ‘ I will not,’

* Seward’s preface to Beaumont and Fletcher.

not,' says Dryden, ' say, that the zeal of God's house hath eaten him up, but I am sure it has devoured some part of his good manners.' In farther defence of himself and his poetic brothers, he confidently asserts, ' there is more hawdy in one play of Beaumont and Fletcher, the Custom of the Country, than in all ours together.' That play has indeed much bad language in it, and some indecent characters ; but no candid reader will say, that it is without scenes which are quite irreprehensible, and some personæ which no audience can dislike.—But Dryden should have called to mind his own Limberham, or Kind Keeper. This comedy, from the beginning to the end, is one scene of lewdness and debauchery, without one sober dialogue and one sufferable character. Father Aldo, whom, in the *dramatis personæ*, he terms an honest, good-natured, free-hearted, old gentleman of the town, is the most abandoned debauchee that ever spent his time in a brothel. This wretch, who is, through age, incapable of all sensual enjoyment himself, becomes the servile and willing agent to supply the fuel of vice to others.

We cannot wonder, at the time such plays as Limberham were represented, women of character were deprived of theatrical entertainment. In those days, it was a constant practice for the ladies to send their friends, of the male sex, as spies, or scouts, to observe the first night of representation. The playhouse was then so offensive, that the citizens kept aloof from it, till the poets of their own faction brought whig politics to combat with tory principles.

I could have wished, that indecency had not stepped from the sock to the buskin : Dryden and Lee threw much obscenity, as well as profaneness, into their most admired heroic plays. Should we allow,

allow, that Lee's Sophonisba has many tender and passionate thoughts, it must be owned that it abounds in passages fit only for a house of entertainment.—The old Emperor, and Nourmahul, his wife, in Aurengzebe, reproach one another in terms unsuitable to common decency as well as dignity of character.

But here let me stop; to make out a process against Dryden would be as cruel as ungrateful. The English versification is more indebted to him than to half the poets from Chaucer's time to the present. Much has been said of this great author's personal conduct, of his religion, and morals.—Let me here quote a passage in his vindication, written by himself in a letter to John Dennis : *For my principles of religion, I will not justify them to you : I know yours are far different. For the same reason, I shall say nothing of my principles of state : I believe you, in yours, follow the dictates of your reason, as I, in mine, do those of my conscience ; if I thought myself in an error, I would retract it. For my morals, between man and man, I am not to be my own judge. I appeal to the world, if I have deceived or defrauded any man ; and, for my private conversation, they, who see me every day, can be the best witnesses whether or no it be blameless and inoffensive.*—This letter was written about the year 1694, some time before he undertook his Translation of Virgil. Dryden died of a mortification which began in his foot ; and, some hours before his death, he charged his son, Charles, not to permit a surgeon to make any operation on pretence of working a cure.

Dr. Johnson's Life of Dryden is a most valuable acquisition to learning ; the criticism is profound and the biography exact.

Otway.

Otway.

C H A P. XL.

Dryd'n fond of high-sounding diction.—Instances of it from *Don Sebastian*.—Otway;—the first writer of genuine tragedy.—Wrote his first tragedies in rime.—*Aicibiades*.—*Mrs. Elizabeth Barry*.—*Don Carlos*.—Dryden.—*Boheme and Mrs. Seymour*.—Otway's defects.—*His Caius Marius*.—His praise of Shakspere.—*Underhill and Nokes*.—*Epilogue to Caius Marius*.—*The Orphan*.—Plot.—Language.—*Venice preserved*.—Shakspere.—*Acasto*.—Charles II.—Duke of Ormond.—Duke of Buckingham.—Anecdote of Carey Dillon and the Duke of Ormond.—Otway's disespect for the clergy;—unjust.—Eminent divines.—*L'Estrange*.—*Euripides*.—Two last lines of the *Orphan*.—*Oedipus*.—First actors of the *Orphan*.—Betterton.—Mountfort.—Williams.—Contention between Powel and Williams.—Smith's epitaph written by Booth.—Some anecdotes of the life of *Mrs. Barry*.—Earl of Rochester.—Tragedy of the Earl of Essex.—Queen Elizabeth.—*Mrs. Porter*.—*Mrs. Barry's excellence acknowledged by Betterton*.—Last part she played.—Her death and epitaph.—Cause of her death.—Chamont.—The elder Mills.—Quin.—Booth and Walker in *Polydore*.—Wilks's *Castalia*.—Barry.—Mr. Garrick.—*Mrs. Porter and Mrs. Cibber*.

NOTWITHSTANDING I had observed, to the honour of Dryden, that he was the first of our dramatic poets, in the reign of Charles II. who, from his imitation of Shakspere's manner, re-

vived natural and colloquial dialogue in tragedy, yet it must be said, that he retained, to the last, a predilection for the marvellous and high-sounding style. Though he had it in his power to be the lawful monarch of true poetical language, he could not abandon the swell and turbulent diction of the arbitrary tyrant. What can we say in defence of many rhapsodical effusions in one of his best tragedies, *Don Sebastian, K. of Portugal*? Dorax, after describing, in very noble terms, the character of Sebastian, wishes to have fought him and to have died with him :

— I, too, would have been slain,
That, catching hold upon his flitting ghost,
I might have robb'd him of his op'ning heaven,
And dragg'd him down with me, spite of predestination !

And Sebastian himself :

Let Fortune empty her whole quiver on me !
I have a soul, that, like an ample shield,
Can take in all, and verge enough for more !

To Thomas Otway was reserved the honour of giving tragedy its true and genuine tone of language, divested of unnatural flight and unnecessary pomp. This writer began, like the rest of our dramatic poets in that age, with tragedy in rime. In his *Alcibiades*, the first and weakest of his tragedies, the public found enough to be pleased ; and, in this play, the great actress, Mrs. Barry, gave the first indication of her rising merit. In his second dramatic piece, he formed his plot from St. Real's History of *Don Carlos, Prince of Spain*. It was acted with very great applause, and contributed at once to raise the reputation and mend the fortune of the author. In his preface, Otway

gives

gives a short anecdote of an envious poet, who declared, *That, egad, he knew not a line in Don Carlos.* *he would be the author of.* In the Rehearsal, *egad,* is a favourite and frequent expression of poet Bayes: Dryden, who had no small share of envy, was, in all probability, the person aimed at. *Don Carlos* continued long a favourite drama: it was revived above fifty years since; at the theatre in Lincoln's-inn fields; when Boheme's action in *Philip*, and Mrs. Seymour, by her excellence in the *Queen*, rendered their names celebrated, and continued to establish a company struggling with difficulties.

But Otway wanted the variety and harmony of Dryden's numbers; nor had he his various learning, or reasoning faculty, to embellish and diversify his tragedies in time. He soon followed that poet's example, and relinquished his chiming fetters for blank verse, which approaches nearest to the iambic of the antients. Otway, like Dryden, warmed his genius with the fire of Shakspeare; but, not content with borrowing from his original, he stole whole scenes from *Romeo and Juliet*, and incorporated them in his *Caius Marius*: this, indeed, he acknowledges in his prologue. The encomium, which he bestows on the old bard, deserves a place amongst those which are accumulated to his honour in the last edition of Johnson and Steevens.

Our Shakspeare wrote, too, in an age as bless'd;
 The happiest poet of his time, and best.
 A gracious prince's favour cheer'd his muse,
 A constant favour he ne'er fear'd to lose.
 Therefore he wrote with fancy unconfin'd,
 And thoughts that were immortal as his mind;
 And, from the crop of his luxurious pen,
 E'er since, succeeding poets humbly glean.
 Though much the most unworthy of the throng,
 Our this-day's poet fears he has done him wrong;

Like

Like greedy beggars, that steal sheaves away,
 You'll find he has rifled him of half a play.
 Amidst his baser dross you'll see it shine,
 Most beautiful, amazing, and divine!

Notwithstanding the merit of such a coalition as Shakspeare and Otway, and the excellent acting of Betterton, Smith, and Mrs. Barry, in the tragic scenes of the play, I believe it chiefly owed its support to Underhill in Sulpitius, and Nokes in the Nurse, who, in this part, excited such repeated merriment, that he carried the name of Nurse Nokes to his grave. Edmund Smith, in his Elegy on the Death of Philips, has given a diverting picture of this inimitable droll, who shone equally in burlesquing tragedy as in acting comic characters:

So, when Nurse Nokes to act young Ammon tries.
 With shambling legs, long chin, and foolish eyes,
 With dangling hands he strokes th'imperial robe,
 And with a cuckold's air commands the globe.
 The pomp and sound the whole buffoon display'd,
 And Ammon's son more mirth than Gomez made.

The superior power of pleasing an audience, in Underhill and Nokes, is acknowledged, by the author, in the epilogue, spoken by Mrs. Barry.

And now for you, who here come wrapp'd in cloaks
 Only for love of Underhill and Nurse Nokes.

Otway's quitting the military life is also pointed out in the same Epilogue.

But which amongst you is there to be found
 Will take his third-day's pawn for fifty pound !
 Or, now he is cashier'd, will fairly venture
 To give him ready money for's debenture ?

Therefore,

Therefore, when he received that fatal doom,
This play came forth, in hopes his friends would come
To help a poor disbanded soldier home.

{

From these lines, we may candidly and fairly conclude, that Otway's leaving the army was attended with no disgrace.

But the reputation of Otway for pathetic powers was, by the success of his *Orphan*, justly exalted above all the dramatists of his own and succeeding times. The characters, by being brought nearer to the condition of the audience, more deeply interest their passions than the fate and fortune of persons who are eminently placed above them.

A young lady, destitute of fortune, and who had lost her parents, left, when a child, to the care and protection of a nobleman, the friend of her dead father, is passionately solicited by his two sons, Castalio and Polydore. The pretensions of the elder, unknown to his brother, are founded on honourable love. The younger, confiding in the sincerity of his brother's declaration, that he would never marry Monimia, but strive to gain her for a mistress, is impelled to affront her with his brutal passion, as she rightly terms it; for his address, however justified in the rank days of Charles II. would scarcely now be tolerated in a brothel. During the progress of their courtship, Chamont, the young lady's brother arrives; and, on the information of an old woman, whom the author's poetical fancy transforms into a witch, he questions his sister on her present situation. The scene is varied with beautiful imagery and affecting passion.—Polydore, the younger brother, by the help of a page, discover's Castalio's treachery; and not knowing of their marriage, listens, and overhears the appointment

ment

ment of the new-married pair. By a stratagem, he contrives to impose himself, in the dark, on Monimia, for his brother; and enjoys her. The distress, raised in consequence of this, ends in the death of the lady and the two rival brothers.

From a plot so simple, the author has raised pathetic scenes, which, from their first representation to the present day, have melted into tenderness the heart of every spectator. The language is easy, flowing, and familiar; sufficiently forcible, without degenerating into vulgarism; it is occasionally strengthened by pleasing description and warm imagery. Had it been raised to greater force, by higher exertion of the poet, it would neither have suited the plot nor the characters. That his style was more energetic, in his tragedy of *Venice Preserved*, must be attributed to the difference of fable and the persons employed in it. He that delineates in his mind the destruction of a state, or kingdom, will immediately find a more animated style rise to his imagination than that which describes the distresses of a private family.—In Shakspeare, the very idea of a conspiracy fires his thoughts and elevates his language.*

In the character of Acasto, Otway has drawn a portrait of a worthy nobleman, who, retired from court, retains his veneration and loyalty for his royal master.—That the author has given a good picture of courts, and more particularly that of Charles II. I think an attentive reader may see in the description of it given by Acasto in the second act. After which, the good old man breaks out into a warm encomium of Charles II.

— Yes, my aspiring boys,
You shall have business when your master wants you!

You

* *Henry IV.*, *Macbeth*, *Julius Caesar*.

You cannot serve a nobler. I have serv'd him.
 In this old body yet the marks remain
 Of many wounds. *I've with this tongue proclaim'd*
His right, ev'n in the face of rank rebellion!
 And, when a foul-mouth'd traitor once profan'd
 His sacred name, with my good sabre drawn,
 Ev'n at the head of all his giddy rout,
 I rush'd, and clove the rebel to the chine !

Of all the noblemen, who, in the reign of Charles II. distinguished themselves for worth and attachment to their royal master, James Duke of Ormond stands the foremost ; and I cannot avoid conjecturing, that this character is here shadowed, at least part of it, under Acasto. What strengthens my opinion is the discourse of the two servants, Paulino and Ernesto, in the first scene. Paulino, after expressing his wonder, that Acasto should still persist in hating the court, where he was born and bred, is informed, by Ernesto, that he had reason for his disgust :

When for what he had borne,
 Long and faithful toil, he might have claim'd
 Places in honour and employment high,
 A huffing, shining, flatt'ring, cringing coward,
 A canker-worm of peace, was raised above him.*

That Ormond was displaced from his government of Ireland, where he was beloved by all ranks of people, by the ungrateful Charles, to gratify the worst man in the kingdom, Villiers Duke of Buckingham, is a fact, to which, I think, Otway alludes. It is true, Ormond did not, like Acasto, retire from court, but kept his place of steward of the household ; which office, Charles, who respected virtues,

* In these attributes of a base mind, we see the genuine character of Buckingham ; who, it is believed, formed a treacherous design, by his instrument, Blood, to assassinate this worthy noble man.

virtues, though he wanted the honesty to imitate them, had not the courage to take from him. The king, who was extremely affable, and made it his constant busines to please every man with his conversation when he went to the levee, saw Ormond always ready to pay his court; but, by Buckingham's influence, he could neither speak to nor look at him. This behaviour was copied by all who frequented the court with a view to gain employment or to secure the minister's favour. But those who had nothing to ask, and went there only to make their bows, formed a circle about Ormond, and listened with great attention to his discourse. It happened one day, that the king, struck with the respect paid to his old loyal servant, was willing to break through his forced silence, and speak to him; but the favourite's presence embarrassed him so much, that Buckingham, in a whisper, said to the king, 'I wish your majesty would resolve me one question: Is the Duke of Ormond out of favour with your majesty, or is your majesty out of favour with the Duke of Ormond? for, of the two, you seem to be in most confusion.* This good man's opinion of the court may be gathered from what he said to Cary Dillon, afterwards Lord Roscommon. Dillon pressed the duke to use his interest for a suit he had to the king; assuring him, at the same time, that he had no friend at court but God and his lordship: 'Alas! poor Cary,' said the duke, 'thou couldst not have two friends that have less interest at court, or less respect shewn them there.'

I shall conclude what I have to say, on this matter, with an account of Charles's subsequent behaviour to Ormond; which is so remarkable, that, though

* Carte's life of Ormond, Vol. II.

though it confers some little honour on the king, it throws a lustre on the duke's character which nothing can tarnish.

After the king, had for several years, treated the Duke of Ormond with coldness and neglect, on a sudden he invited him to supper: he treated him with such familiarity and kindness as if nothing had happened, and appointed him once more to the government of Ireland. The next day, at the levee, Charles said to his courtiers: ‘Yonder comes Ormond, I have done all I can to disoblige that man, and to make him as discontented as others: *but he will not be disengaged with me; he will be loyal in spite of my teeth.*—I must e'en take him in again; and he is the fittest person to go to Ireland.

If I am deceived in my conjecture, respecting the application of Acasto's character to the Duke of Ormond, I shall only have amused my readers with some anecdotes which are not to be found in the general history of this country.

Act II.

Chamont and the Chaplain.

C H A M O N T.

Nay, but thou art a hypocrite. Is there not one
Of all thy tribe that's honest in your schools?
Ye all live loathsome, servile, sneaking, lives;
Not free enough to practise generous truth,
Though you pretend to teach it to the world

Men, immersed in luxury and debauchery, as Otway and his brother-poets were in the reign of Charles, could not be very impartial judges of a clergyman's sacred function or character. They had no opportunity to be acquainted with the worthy

thy men of that order; their time was dissipated in places which were unknown even to sober laymen. Otway was the son of a clergyman, who left him, for inheritance, as he himself has told us,* nothing but his loyalty; and this alone might surely have prevented his illiberal abuse on the order. But, if ever the clergy of this country deserved esteem and respect, it was during the reign of this abandoned monarch.—Before the restoration of Charles, the church of England had endured a twenty years persecution; and, from that fiery trial, came out more pure and bright. Such ornaments of piety and learning can hardly be produced in any period of our history, as at that time shone out with superior lustre.—The names of Wilkins, Cudworth, Barrow, Tillotson, Stillingfleet, Whichcot, Scot, Patrick, Burnet, and Sharp, to whom many more might be added, will justify what I have asserted.

That *boutefeu*, Sir Roger L'Estrange, towards the latter end of Charles's reign, by his inflammatory paper, called the *Observator*, endeavoured to mislead the clergy in general. But such men as I have mentioned were not to be shaken or biased by a hacknied incendiary. The interested and fanatic part of the clergy, and such all churches have, were, indeed, dupes to L'Estrange and their own passions; but the greater part, to their honour, remained untainted.

Act

* In his dedication.

Act IV. Scene I.

Acasto, Chamont, Monimia.

A C A S T O.

You talk to me in parables, Chamont.
 You may have known that I am no wordy man.
 Fine speeches are the instruments of knaves,
 Or fools that use them when they want good sense.
 But honesty
 Needs no disguise or ornament. ———
 Be plain.

Few of our dramatic poets, except Dryden and Congreve, seem to have had any acquaintance with the Greek tragedians: I should have otherwise suspected, that Otway had, in the above lines of Acasto, imitated the following speech of Polynices to his brother, Eteocles, in the *Phœnissæ* of Euripides:

Απλές ο μυθος της αληθειας εφυ,
 Κε ποκιλων δει τα γδιχ' ερμενευματων·
 Εχει γαρ αυτα καιρον· ο δ' αδικος λογος,
 Νοσων εν αυτῳ, φαρμακων δειται σοφων.

The words of truth are simple; justice needs not
 The circling train of wily argument
 Clear in its proofs. Injustice, in itself
 Unsound, requires the medicinal trick
 Of glosing sophistry.

Potter's Euripides.

Act V. Two last lines.

C H A M O N T.

'Tis thus that heav'n its empire does maintain :
 It may afflict, but man must not complain.

This

This is but a bad moral deduced from the catastrophe of the fable, and borders on fatalism. Oedipus, in the conclusion of *Phœnissæ*, utters the same doctrine.

Αλλα γαρ τι ταῦτα θέρηναι ματηνούρομεν;
Τας γαρ εκ θεων αγαγκας θυμτον ουτα δει φερειν.

— — — — — But why in vain
Lament I thus and wail, since mortal man
Must bear the hard necessity of fate!

Potter.

The principal original actors, in the *Orphan*, were—Betterton, Castalio; Williams, Polydore Smith, Chamont; and Mrs. Barry, Monimia Cibber has told us, that the Castalio of Betterton was superior to all the performances he had ever seen of the character; though he confessed, at the same time, that he was not so eminent in representing lovers, from person and elocution, as parts which required less softness. Mountfort, a younger man, who succeeded him, being endowed by nature with a handsome person, a most melodious voice, and pleasing address, was, at least to the female part of the audience, which I think best qualified to distinguish, rather nearer to the idea of an accomplished and successful lover. Williams was an actor of merit, but courted the bottle with more vigour than the profession of acting. Polydore was formerly so great a favourite with the audience, that when Powel and he were cast into the two brothers they contended who should act this approved libertine; and he, who obtained the favour, paid for it, as I have been told, with a fine for a sacrifice at the shrine of Bacchus. Smith was an actor of such eminence as to excite the indolent Booth to write his epitaph. He was long the associate of

Better-

Betterton in the management of the theatre. Mrs. Barry's *Mimonia* seems to have raised that reputation to the height which had been gradually increasing. As Cibber considers this actress to have been far superior to all he had ever known in tragedy, it will not be an idle business to give some account of the methods employed to form so much excellency.

It is said, that Mrs. Barry was the daughter of Edward Barry, Esq. a barrister,* who was afterwards called Colonel Barry, from his having raised a regiment, for the service of Charles I. in the civil wars.—The misfortunes arising from this engagement, involved himself and family in such distress, that his children were obliged to make their own fortunes. Lady Davenant, an acquaintance of Sir William Davenant, from her friendship to Colonel Barry, gave his daughter a genteel education. She made her her constant companion, and always visited her acquaintance with her young friend. This early knowledge of polite life was of service to Mrs. Barry, as it gave an ease and grace to her person and behaviour. Above forty years since, I saw, at Mrs. Bracegirdle's house, in Howard-street, a picture of Mrs. Barry, by Kneller, in the same apartments with the portraits of Betterton, Mr. Congreve, and Mrs. Bracegirdle. Mrs. Barry, it appeared from the painting, had not been a great beauty, but her countenance commanded attention and was extremely expressive. When her friend, Lady Davenant, recommended her to the stage, her pretensions to notice were a good air and manner, and a very strong and pleasing voice. Her ear was so bad, and the players found it so extremely difficult to teach her, that they pronounced her incapable

* History of the Stage, printed for E. Curi, 1741.

capable of making any progress in acting. Three times, says the historian of the English stage, she was rejected, and, by the interest of her patroness re-instated. Cibber speaks only of one discharge

There was so little expectation of her arriving to any degree of excellence, that several persons of quality, on seeing her attempt a character of some importance, gave their opinion, that she never could be an actress. The earl of Rochester, who at that time, paid his addresses to Mrs. Barry, offered a considerable wager, that, in the space of six months, he would engage she would be one of the most approved performers of the theatre. The earl's offer was accepted. From the moment he made this engagement, he renewed his addresses to Mrs. Barry; and, by often conversing with her, found she was mistress of exquisite charms. It has been said, that he fixed his affections on her more strongly than on any other female. Letters addressed to Madam B—, by the Earl of Rochester, were printed in that edition of his poem fit for the public eye, which was published by J Tonson in 1716; and are generally said to be the earl's epistolary correspondence with this celebrated actress. In some of them, he speaks with great fondness of a child he had by her, to whom he afterwards left by will, an annuity of 40l.* One of the first parts, the earl taught his fair pupil was Isabella, the Queen of Hungary, in the earl of Orrery's tragedy of Mustapha. Mrs. Barry had an excellent understanding, but not a musical ear; so that she could not catch the sounds or emphases taught her; but fell into a disagreeable tone, the fault of most young stage-adventurers.—To cure her of this defect Lord Rochester caused

* History of the English stage, 1741.

caused her to enter into the meaning of every sentiment; he taught her not only the proper cadence or sounding of the voice, but to seize also the passions, and adapt her whole behaviour to the situations of the character. It is said that in order to accomplish his intention, besides the many private instructions he gave her, he caused her to rehearse the part no less than thirty times upon the stage, and, of these, about twelve times in the dress in which she was to play.

The first night she acted this part, Rochester brought the king, the duke of York, and his dutchess, to the play. Her look of distress, and her whole deportment, before she spoke, greatly prejudiced the audience in her favour: but, when she uttered the following words to the Cardinal,—

My lord, my sorrow seeks not your relief:
You are not fit to judge a mother's grief;
You have no child for an untimely grave,
Nor can you lose what I desire to save.—

Here they saw majesty distressed; and a widowed queen, insulted by her subjects, feeling all that an afflicted mother could suffer, from a stern counsellor's forcing her to yield her only son, to be sacrificed to the enemy, to save themselves and city. The several conflicting passions were so feelingly touched by her, that the theatre resounded with loud applause. The Dutchess of York was so pleased with Mrs. Barry, that she made her a present of her wedding suit; from her she learned, soon afterwards, to improve in the English language; and, when Queen of England, it is said she gave her her coronation-robcs, to act Queen Elizabeth, in the Earl of Essex.—In this wretched tragedy, her action was so truly excellent, that, in spite of

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the worst language that an author can possibly write, she revived Elizabeth, the great idol of her people.

'To say, in the common language, that Elizabeth loved her people, is talking idly,' says Voltaire; 'for what prince ever loved the people?' However, she certainly had the art to make them believe so; for she governed them above forty years, to their own happiness and satisfaction, and the approbation of all Europe. Mrs. Barry perfectly understood the character of this princess; she pronounced

What means my giving people?

with such exquisite skill, that it never failed to draw the approving notice of the audience. Above fifty years since, I saw her great imitator and admired pupil, Mrs. Porter, in this character, and Elizabeth in the Albion Queens. In both she acquitted herself to the admiration of the audience; though all, who had remembered Mrs. Barry, pronounced her very inferior to her teacher. She was so lame, that, during the whole play, she was obliged to make use of a crutched cane, which she contrived to use with advantage, especially in that scene of the Albion Queens, where Elizabeth, with wonderful dissimulation and royal hypocrisy, seems unwilling to sign the unfortunate Mary's death-warrant: in the assumed agitation of her mind during the feigned conflict, and when she pronounced the following words—

Quick! give my roving thoughts no time for reason;
But thou, successful devil, put the pen
Into my hand, and hell into my bosom!—

And after signing the warrant—

There, there, it is—

Mrs.

Mrs. Porter, with her cane, struck the stage with such vehemence, that the audience reiterated loud applause.

But Mrs. Barry was mistress of all the passions of the mind: love, joy, grief, rage, tenderness, and jealousy, were all represented by her with equal skill and equal effect. In the play of the Orphan, when, on leaving Castalio, in the last act, she burst out into that affecting exclamation, ‘ O poor Castalio !’ she never failed to shed tears herself, nor was it possible for the audience to restrain from correspondent lamentations. Betterton bore this testimony to the perfection of this eminent actress: that she often so greatly exerted her art in an indifferent character, that her acting had given success to plays that would disgust the most patient reader. When she accepted a part, she consulted the author concerning his intention in every scene. The last new character she acted was, I think, Phædra, in Edmund Smith’s tragedy of Phædra and Hippolytus. Though Mrs. Oldfield and the author fell out concerning some particular lines in the part of Ismena, Mrs. Barry and he were in perfect harmony.

Cibber relates, in his Apology, that Mrs. Barry died, of a fever, in the latter part of Queen Anne’s reign; and judges, by this expression, in her last delirium,—‘ Ha ! ha ! and so they make us lords by dozens !’—that it was about the time when twelve peers were created at once. The date of her epitaph, at Acton, is fixed two years after this extraordinary promotion.* An actress,

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who

* The following epitaph is in the church-yard of Acton:

who was in London when Mrs. Barry died, assured me, many years since, that her death was owing to the bite of a favourite lap-dog, who, unknown to her, had been seized with madness.

I have dwelt the longer on Mrs. Barry, on account of her superior excellence.—Cibber, writing in the year 1738, declared he had seen nothing equal to her.

The character of Chamont had not engaged the attention of very eminent actors. The elder Mills, many years before his death, was unqualified for a part which required a younger man, with much variety of passion, and quick transition from anger to calmness, and from calmness to returning rage. Quin was utterly unfit for that, or any other part in the play, except Acasto ; his judgment directed him to quit Chamont many years before he left the stage.

The gay libertine air, which Booth gave to Polydore, has not been equalled since, though Walker, his pupil, was more than a tolerable copy of his master. The manners of the times are so utterly changed, that the gross address and brutal courtship of the character must now be softened into a more delicate sense of what is due to a young lady of honour.

The Castalio of Wilks was long and justly admired. His graceful address in the first act, his warm enjoyment of Monimia's reconciliation to him in the second, his rage and resentment in the third and fourth act, but, above all, his tenderness
and

Near this place
Lies the body of Elizabeth Barry,
Of the parish of St. Mary Le Savoy ;
Who departed this life the 7th of November, 1713,
Aged 55 years.

and distress in the fine interview with Monimia in the fifth act, a love scene as truly affecting as any to be found in tragedy, justly entitled him to the spectators most generous approbation. And yet those, who can remember Wilks and Barry, will own, that the latter much excelled the former. In expressing the blended passions of love, tenderness, and grief, Barry was unrivalled. In the Memoirs of Mr. Garrick's Life, I have said so much of his justly-admired Chamont, that I can add nothing to it here. To pass by, with neglect, the Monimia of Mrs. Porter would be unjust to the merits of an excellent actress.—To those, who had not seen Mrs. Barry, notwithstanding her unharmonious voice, she appeared inimitable. This actress concealed the art of her profession so skilfully, that she seemed to realise the passions, and to be inspired with the various situations of her characters.

Mrs. Cibber's Monimia many will call to mind with pleasure, and do justice to the fine expression and feeling of that impassioned performer. The public saw, I believe, only during two winters, with uncommon pleasure, in the tragedy of the Orphan, a Garrick, a Barry, and a Cibber.

C H A P. XLI.

Plot of Venice Preserved.—*Narrative of St. Real and the tragedy compared*.—*Bedamar and the Duke d'Offuna*.—*Shakspeare's Richard III*.—*Euripides*.—*Pierre and Jaffier*.—*History of a Grecian lady*.—*Particular time when Venice Preserved was acted*.—*Duke of York*.—*Oates, Bedloe, &c.*—*Popish Plot*.—*Otway a loyalist*.—*Scenes of Venice Preserved hurt by ribaldry*.—*Lord Shaftesbury*.—*Antonio and Renault*.—*Otway's enemies described*.—*Whigs and tories*.—*The senate of Venice and the house of commons*.—*Otway's character in Jaffier*.—*First act of the play*.—*Belvidera's excellence*.—*Gay's parody*.—*Pierre's artifice*.—*Conspirators*.—*Renault and Elliot*.—*Belvidera and the Conspirators*.—*Suspicions entertained against Jaffier*.—*His anxiety and distress*.—*Art of the Poet*.—*Fate of Pierre ; and Jaffier*.—*Acquilina and Antonio*.—*Wonderful pathos of the last act*.—*Atheist, the last play of Otway*.—*His unhappy circumstances*.—*Cause assigned*.—*Common account of Otway's death*;—contradicted by Dr. Warton.—*True cause of Dryden's envy to Otway*.—*Death, the great destroyer of envy*.—*Original actors in Venice Preserved*.—*Betterton and Smith*.—*Mrs. Barry*.—*Mr. Wilks and Mrs. Rogers*.—*Mills in Pierre*.—*Booth and Wilks*.—*Colley Cibber*.—*Harry Carey*.—*Booth's want of candour*.—*Mrs. Porter, Ryan Quin, and Mrs. Seymour*.—*Garrick resigns Pierre for Jaffier*.—*Moffop's Pierre*.—*An anecdote*.—*Mrs. Cibber*.—*Mrs. Siddons*.—*Mrs. Yates, Mrs Crawford, and Miss Young*.—*Mr. Brereton*.—*Mr. Bensley*.

THE fable of Venice Preserved afforded a larger field for the exertion of Otway's abilities than the catastrophe of an unhappy marriage in a private family. A plot, formed for the destruction of a state is a subject, I have already observed, that would rouse the genius of any writer.

The story is taken from St. Real's Conspiracy of the Marquis de Bedamar and the Duke d'Offuna against the Republic of Venice. The narrative of St. Real is skilfully written; but is by no means superior to the English tragedy, as Voltaire presumptuously asserts. In the History, you have some characters strongly marked and well delineated; more especially of that extraordinary man, the Marquis of Bedamar, the most accomplished politician then living; you have likewise a good outline of the most remarkable conspirators, particularly Pierre and Renault. But can we compare a bare narrative with the animating dialogues of Pierre and Jaffier, and the heart-felt scenes of anguish between the lovely distressed Belvidera and her almost distracted husband. In St. Real, Jaffier becomes a conspirator against the state of Venice, in whose military service he was employed, from the hopes of plunder, and his attachment to Pierre, his friend. In the tragedy, he is driven to the utmost distress, with a wife whom he tenderly loves, by a cruel father-in-law; and, though nothing can justify treason, yet surely the being surprised into a conspiracy by extreme want, and the insidious arts of a man he esteems to be a friend, exhibits motives less sordid than the other. St. Real's account of the conspiracy resembles a gloomy representation of a storm, interspersed with

flashes

flashes of lightning which serve to make the picture more terrible and deformed.

The scenes of conflicting passions, animated by interesting situations of character, render Venice Preserved a grand historical painting, worthy the pencil of the most accomplished artist.

The conduct of the plot has been highly censured by the critics, not altogether, I am afraid, without cause. Something may yet be advanced in our author's defence: the hero of the piece, they say, is a villain; and so is Richard the Third, in the tragedy of that name; but the use Shakespeare has made of his actions and character has fixed this piece for ever on the English stage. The answer, which Euripides gave to one who censured him for bringing on the stage Ixion, who was a wicked blasphemer, may serve for Otway: 'It is true,' said the Greek poet, 'I have exhibited a man talking profanely; but, remember, for that crime I have nailed him to a cross.' The English poet may allege, in his behalf, 'I have adorned Pierre with sentiments which would become a better man; I have made him

'A fine, gay, bold-sac'd, villain:

But at last I have brought him to the wheel;
from which he escapes only by a milder death, the
stab of a friend.'

Neither Pierre nor Jaffier, according to St. Real, were Venetians. The first was, by birth, a Norman; by profession, a corsair; one who had given proofs of his knowledge of sea-affairs, and had made a large fortune by his courage in attacking, and afterwards plundering, ships in the Mediterranean. Jaffier was of Provence, and principally known as the particular friend of Pierre.

From

From this connection, and by marrying him to a daughter of a Venetian senator, the poet has worked up the plot of his play. Venice is saved, in Otway, by the restless charms and pressing remonstrances of a virtuous woman. In St. Real, a female, from the spirit of revenge, joins in a plot to massacre a whole people. A Grecian lady of a noble family, born in one of the islands of the Archipelago, was seduced to give up her honour, by the governor of the isle, under a promise of immense riches. The father of the lady, on his soliciting the seducer to perform his compact, was basely murdered by him for his importunity. The daughter immediately, with all her effects, set sail for Venice. She laid her case before the senate, and petitioned for justice. They turned a deaf ear to her remonstrances ; and she, having spent her little all in vain attendance upon the senate, was reduced to the necessity of repairing her loss by her beauty. No resentment can be more violent than that of persons nobly born, when driven by the hand of power to gain subsistence by means unworthy of their rank. This is the lady whom Otway calls, in the play, Acquilina. Otway might have made a different use of this character; he might, perhaps, have wrought some interesting situations from the contrast of the two females.

The second title of the play, the Plot Discovered, was given to it in allusion to that which is called the Popish Plot, which had then raged when this play was represented. The particular time, when *Venice Preserved* was first acted, is fixed by the author in his epilogue, speaking of James Duke of York :

With indignation, then, let each brave heart
Rouse and unite to take his injur'd part ;
Till royal love and goodness call him home,
And songs of triumph wait him as he come.

The duke was then in Scotland, whence he returned to England in March, 1682. From the detested characters of Oates, Bedloe, and others, the witnesses employed to authenticate that vile combination against the public quiet, called the Popish Plot, it has been questioned whether such a conjuration ever existed ; though few will deny, that, during the greatest part of Charles's reign, and the whole of that of his brother James, there was a formed conspiracy to subvert the religion and constitution of the kingdom. Hume himself brings testimony to this. Otway, though not rewarded for his attachment to the court, was a very staunch loyalist. Many passages, from this tragedy and *Caius Marius*, may be alleged in proof ; and, indeed, such was his zeal against the whigs, that he contaminated his *Venice Preserved* with the most indecent ribaldry, from no other view than to ridicule the character of Antony Ashley Cooper, first Earl of Shaftesbury. Antonio, the foolish speech-maker, the lover, in the play, of *Acquolina*, is made to represent this great statesman ; and, when Leigh and Mrs. Currer performed the parts of doting cully and rampant courtezan, the applause was as loud as the triumphant tories, for so they were at that time, could bestow. But the author knew too well, that the audience could not be so far imposed on as to imagine there was any resemblance, except, perhaps, that which he imputes to him of lasciviousness, between his foolish Antonio and Shaftesbury ; and therefore, in his prologue,

prologue, he seems to hint, that he intended the part of Renault, as well as Antonio, for our great politician :

Here is a traitor that is very old,
Turbulent, subtle, mischievous, and bold ;
Bloody, revengeful ; and, to crown his part,
Loves fumbling with a wench with all his heart ;
Till, after having many changes pass'd,
In spite of age, thank heaven ! is hang'd at last.
Next is a senator that keeps a whore ;
In Venice none a higher office bore ;
To lewdness every night the lecher ran :
Shew me, all London, such another man ;
Match him at Mother Creswell's, if you can.

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Some allusion, to the search made in the Earl of Shaftesbury's apartments for treasonable papers, seems here intended. The report given out was, that a female friend of his lordship was discovered under his bed, or in a closet.

The poet, in his epilogue, takes notice of certain malicious enemies his loyalty had provoked ; but the lines are rendered so obscure, by length of time, that nothing certain can be discovered from them :

And, though against him causeless hatred rise,
And daily, where he goes of late, he spies
The scowls of sullen and revengeful eyes,
'Tis what he knows with much contempt to bear ;
He serves a cause too good to let him fear.
He fears no poison from an incens'd drab ;
No ruffian's five-foot sword nor rascal's stab ;
Nor any other snares of mischief laid :—
Not a Rose-alley cudgel-ambuscade.

{

In the last line, Otway, perhaps, alludes to a sound beating, which Dryden underwent, from two unknown persons, much about this time.

During the Popish Plot, and while the exclusion-bill was depending, the whigs and tories seemed to have been in a state of political insanity ; the latter espousing openly the cause of arbitrary power, while the former were little less than staunch advocates for democracy.—On the side of loyalty were listed the poets of genius : Dryden, Lee, and Otway, were an overmatch for Shadwell, Settle, and others. The audiences, divided in political principles, fell often into riot and tumult. One side of the theatre loudly applauded what the other with violence exploded. The senate of Venice was an excellent stalking-horse, whence Otway took his aim at the house of commons. The following part of Pierre's speech, in the first act, was levelled at the abuse of power, in that assembly, by the frequent and unjust imprisonment of persons who were supposed to be concerned in the Popish Plot :

To see our senators
Cheat the deluded people with a show
Of liberty.—
They say by them our hands are free from fetters :
Yet whom they please they put in basest bonds ;
Bring whom they please to infamy and ruin.—
All that bear this are villains ! and I one,
Not to rouse up at the great call of nature,
And check the growth of these domestic spoilers,
Who make us slaves, and tell us 'tis our charter !

These lines were heard, by the majority of the audience, with rapture and applause, and applied as the author intended. But, amidst all his efforts to support the royal cause, poor Otway was ever in distress. Some passages, in the first and second act, we can justly apply to the poet himself.—In the opening of the play, he thus complains to his father-in-law, Priuli :

—For I *have* known

The luscious sweets of plenty ; every night
Have slept with soft content about my head,
And never wak'd but to a joyful morning :
Yet now must fall, like a full ear of corn,
Whose blossom scap'd, yet's wither'd in the rip'ning.

And farther, in the same act, still more pathetically :

—Tell me why, good heaven !

Thou mad'st me what I am ? with all the spirit,
Aspiring thoughts, and elegant desires,
That fill the happiest man ? Ah ! rather why
Did'st thou not form me sordid as my fate ;
Base-minded, dull, and fit to carry burdens ?
Why have I sense to know the curse that's on me ?

The fable is conducted with art. The exposition, or, as the learned term it, the protasis, of the plot, is exceedingly happy. In the first scene, between Jaffier and Priuli, Jaffier pathetically describes his own and Belvidera's distressful situation ; the noble manner by which he gained her affection, by plunging into the deep to save her life at the hazard of his own, with other corresponding incidents, are described in terms most lively and affecting. Pierre's arrival brings fresh affliction and distress to the unhappy Jaffier ; the pillage of his house, by the implements of legal power, is painted in the most aggravating terms, and described as an action of wanton brutality. The speaker closes his invective with a beautiful portrait of the wretched Belvidera ; and this the author artfully heightens with all the force of animated expression, blended with pathetic touches, to increase the anguish of the unhappy husband, and prepare his mind to entertain the most desperate counsels. The act is closed with a most affecting scene

scene between the unfortunate pair. The panegyric, on the beautiful part of the creation, is highly finished by an author whose whole soul seems to have been made up of love and friendship. The conjugal affection of Belvidera, in circumstances of the most trying nature, is the boast of the English stage; nor can we find any thing equal to it, except in the Alcestis of Euripides.

Gay, in his farce of the What d'ye call it, has parodied one or two speeches of this affecting dialogue :

J A F F I E R.

Can't thou bear cold and hunger? &c.

F I L B E R T.

Can't thou bear hunger? can't thou march and toil?

B E L V I D E R A.

Though the bare earth be all our resting-place,
Its roots our food, some clift our habitation,
I'll make this arm a pillow for thy head;
And, as thou sighing liest, and swell'd with sorrow,
Creep to thy bosom, pour the balm of love
Into thy soul, and kiss thee to thy rest;
Then praise our God, and watch thee till the morning.

K I T T Y C A R R O T.

Yes, yes, my Thomas, we will go together;
Beyond the seas together we will go;
In camps together, as in harvest, glow.
This arm shall be a bolster for thy head;
I'll fetch clean straw to make my soldier's bed;
There, while thou sleep'it, my apron o'er thee hold,
Or with it patch the tent against the cold.

The difference, between parody and burlesque, is here exemplified. There is nothing, in Kitty Carrot's speech, that can move laughter. The situations

situations are similar ; but, in rank and education, the persons are different, and consequently their language.

The strange mixture of absurd and obscene interviews, between the old doting senator and his mistress, with the main plot, has now deprived the play of its proper connection of business. The fable is too much hurried on, the scenes are broken, and the time shortened, in many interesting situations, from the necessity of expunging what was written to please a court-faction, but was become, in process of time, odious and disgusting. To dwell upon such beauties, as cannot but occur to every reader of *Venice Preserved*, would be impertinent. I shall just take notice of some remarkable in style, and of some deviations of the poet from St. Real's history of the conspiracy. In the first scene of the second act, between Jaffier and Pierre, we cannot avoid calling to mind that colloquial language so familiar to Shakspeare and other old dramatists : Pierre, putting a purse into his friend's hand, says,—

—Here's money to buy pins;
Marriage is chargeable.

The other replies,—

—I but half wish'd to see
The devil, and he's here already. Well !
What must this buy ?—rebellion ! murder ! treason !
Tell me which way I must be damn'd for this !

Without going into the usual method of censoring the style of our modern tragedies, I believe every man will agree, with me, that the language of Otway and Southern cannot be mended or improved ;—through them nature speaks, and speaks with equal freedom and force.

Renault's

Renault's character, as a conspirator of eminence, and in great trust with the Spanish ambassador, is drawn faithfully from St. Real. Why Otway should involve Elliot, his countryman, in this conspiracy, I can see no cause, except his wantonly branding the English with the charge of treason. But the poet found no warrant for this in his original. St. Real says, indeed, that Elliot was an experienced sea-officer in the service of Spain; and no otherwise concerned in the plot than as he was employed by the Duke of Ossuna to command a fleet, which was to second the enterprise of Bedamar against the republic of Venice. One of the bravest and worthiest of men has made the name of Elliot dear to every lover of his country, dear to all mankind; and it is a pleasure to wipe away a disgrace fixed on that honoured name by the inadvertence or folly of the poet.

The introducing an amiable and delicate female, amongst a gang of desperate parricides, must shock the spectator; and, from that circumstance, he may divine the discovery of the plot. The attempt of Renault, to violate the chastity of Belvidera, rouses Jaffier from that state of mind in which his mistaken friendship for Pierre had plunged him. The sanguinary and brutal charge of Renault, which is partly copied from the History, is heard by Pierre with approbation and pleasure, but by Jaffier with horror and detestation. In the history, as well as the tragedy, Renault observes the countenance and distress of Jaffier, during his positive orders to spare neither sex nor age. He communicates his suspicions to Pierre, who, with some difficulty, prevails upon him not to kill his friend on suspicion; and lays before him, with great earnestness, the apprehended consequences of such

such an act. The senate, on hearing that d'Osuna's fleet was at sea, ordered Pierre to sail immediately, with some ships of war, to watch their motions. To this single circumstance, perhaps, Venice owed her safety; for Jaffier, being separated from his friend, who had kept a watchful eye over his conduct, had now full leisure to indulge his melancholy reflections, and to give way, undisturbed, to the motions of humanity arising in his breast. The conflict of his mind was great. His imagination painted to him all the horrors of a city surprized and taken by storm, subjected to the most shocking of disasters; he heard, he thought, the cries of children trodden under feet, the groans of old men whose throats were devoted to the sword, and the screams of virgins and matrons ravished.* So strongly was his imagination impressed with terror, that he saw nothing but palaces tumbling down, churches in flames, and the most holy places violated with blood and slaughter.

Venice, the sad and deplorable Venice, was continually before his eyes. On the other hand, he reflected how infamous it was to break through his most solemn engagements and betray his friends. And such friends! men of intrepidity, equal to the discharge of every office in the cabinet or the field. And what, alas! will be their punishment? the most excruciating which the wit of the most arbitrary tyrants could possibly invent. The very prisons of Venice were more calculated to shake the courage of the stoutest man than the capital punishments of other nations. These last reflections kept him in suspense for a time, and balanced the afflicting sensations which the idea of Venice destroyed had

* St. Real.

had excited. His curiosity to see the ceremony of the doge's wedding the Adriatic, which preceded the day intended for the execution of the conspiracy, at length determined his wavering mind. The sight of all Venice assembled in tranquillity to enjoy this great day of festivity, filled Jaffier with the tenderest and most unsupportable emotions ; he could not endure the thought of such a number of happy people being on a sudden plunged into the deepest gulf of misery and destruction.

The reader, by comparing these circumstances, borrowed from the narrative, will perceive with how much art the poet has woven them into his plot to produce dramatic effect. All the affecting motives, which prevail on the most determined man to quit his purpose, are put into the mouth of Belvidera. The exacting an oath from the senate, to spare the lives of twenty-two conspirators, is likewise taken from St. Real. The passionate and pathetic scenes which follow, and the rest of the plot, except the senate's violating their oaths of pardon, owe their existence to the poet's invention. The fate of Pierre is thus related by the historian.— Two persons of trust were sent on board the vessel which Pierre commanded ; who under pretence of communicating fresh orders from the senate, drew him into a private conference, in the midst of which they plunged their poniards into his bosom, and afterwards caused his body to be thrown into the sea.

Jaffier, inconsolable for the loss of his friend, with great bitterness reproached the senate with their perfidy. They obliged him to take from them 3000 ducats, and banished him their territories. Breathing nothing but revenge, he soon after joined some of the conspirators, who were raising disturbances

disturbances in Brescia, and was taken fighting manfully, endeavouring to sell his life as dear as he could. He was brought to Venice, and drowned by order of the state.

The last act, in pathetic distress, is equal to any of the former. After Belvidera has wrought her father to compassion, and to a promise of saving the lives of the conspirators, an interview between Acquilina and Antonio takes place, which fills up the time till Jaffier has been informed that Priuli had been unsuccessful; but the obscene trash of the dialogue has long rendered it unfit for representation, and it is now entirely left out. By these means, the scene is greatly precipitated. I remember that, about fifty years since, when I saw *Venice Preserved* at Covent-garden, so much of Antonio's character was retained, as gave time to carry on the plot with some probability; and Hippisley, in a soliloquy, where he displays the ridiculous eloquence of the character, entertained the audience long enough for preserving the continuity of the scenes. At present, the immediate meeting of Belvidera and Jaffier, after her interview with Priuli is too sudden and abrupt.

It is impossible to read, much less to see represented on the stage, the parting-scene between the husband and wife, without the deepest affliction. This man had more power over the heart than any writer of our nation, except, perhaps, Richardson. The affright, poor Belvidera is thrown into by Jaffier's drawing his dagger, is succeeded by the bell which announces the execution of Pierre; and makes a fine picture of pity, distress, and terror!

Quin talked once of restoring the long-omitted scene of Pierre with the Priest, which followed that

that of Jaffier and Belvidera; but his better reflections taught him to pay respect to decency and the sacred order.—The genius of the poet shines out to the last. The laugh of Pierre, interrupted by the agonising groan, with the madness of Belvidera, conclude this master-piece of Otway.

To Barry's good taste we owe the absence of the ghosts of Jaffier and Pierre.—Belvidera sees her husband and his friend only in her distracted mind.

Otway's last play was the *Atheist*, a comedy of loose intrigue and dissolute manners. Beaugard's father seems to be copied from Dryden's Father Aldo, in his *Limberham*. This play was acted, by the principal comedians of the united companies, about a few months before the death of the author, and is totally unworthy of him; the same, I am afraid, must be said of all his comedies.—Garrick, above thirty years since, revived his *Soldier's Fortune*; but, so changed were the manners of the times, that the actors, with Woodward at their head, were severely treated by the audience.

The great reputation, which Otway gained by his *Venice Preserved*, did not, it seems, mend his fortune. By his dedications to Lord Dorset, we are assured of that nobleman's great generosity to him.—Otway was, it seems, in Edmund Curl's case, who could not get daily bread without daily books; for he told his patron, that his daily bread depended on his daily business.* He had many patrons; and, amongst the rest, James Duke of York, who was remarkable for his firmness to those who were attached to his interest. I am afraid we must attribute great part of his misfortunes to the dissolute manners of the time; by the strong current of which,

* Dedication of *Friendship and Fashion*.

which, a man of an easy thoughtless disposition, and strongly addicted to social pleasures, is borne along insensibly. In a life of our author, published, with his works, about forty years since, the biographer tells us a melancholy story of his extreme poverty ; of his being reduced to the necessity of borrowing a shilling, to satisfy the cravings of his appetite, from a gentleman unknown to him ; who, being shocked and surprised at the unexpected distress of the author of *Venice Preserved*, put into his hand a guinea ; that Otway was choked with a piece of bread which he immediately purchased. The day of his death, and place where he died, are fixed to the 14th of April, 1685, at a public house on Tower-hill.

But all lovers of genius will think themselves indebted to Dr. Warton ; who, from the papers of Dr. Spence, has proved the afflicting tale to be a fiction or misinformation. Otway owed his death to an act of generous friendship. A friend of his had received a very gross affront ; the injurious person soon after withdrew to some part of the continent. Otway pursued him to demand satisfaction ; in his return home, he was seized with a cold, which ended in a distemper that put a period to his life.*

Our author, while living, met with many enemies ; of whom, in his dedications, prefaces, and prologues he frequently complains. The singular merit of his two best pieces was, in my opinion, the capital fault of which he was guilty, and not to be pardoned by his rivals. It is said, that Dryden disliked him on account of his friendship for Tom Shadwell : that, indeed, could not be a recommendation

* Warton's Observations on Pope, Vol. II.

dation to the laureat; but the involuntary tears, which were shed at his *Orphan* and *Venice Preserved*, were the criminals that made him hateful to Dryden, whose scenes were never honoured with so heart-felt an approbation. This he never forgave till the great subduer of envy had erased his name from the number of the living. *When the wolf is full*, says Ben Jonson, *he howls.**—The expression is coarse; but, I fear, the application is too just. When Otway was in his grave, Dryden spoke of him with tenderness, and lamented that he had not known him in an earlier period of his life. He then, and I believe not till then, acknowledged his superior power in touching the heart.† It is to the credit of Otway and Shadwell, that the being of different parties caused no interruption to their friendship.

A wretched tragedy called *Heroic Friendship*, was printed in 1719. The editor had the assurance to assert that it was written by Otway; the public saw at once that it was an impudent forgery. The MS. was not in his hand-writing, nor was there in the composition a ray of genius.

The two principal characters of *Venice Preserved*, Jaffier and Pierre, by Betterton and Smith, were much admired and applauded. Tenderness, friendship, and love, conflicting with rage, terror, and remorse, were painted with the liveliest colours, and shewn in the most striking attitudes by the accomplished Betterton. Smith's person was commanding; and the spectators justified, by applause, the propriety of that line where he calls himself—

A fine, gay, bold-fac'd villain, as thou see'st me.

And

* Sejanus, Act II.

† Dryden's preface to his Translation of Fresnoy's Art of Painting.

And Bedamar's compliment :

The poets who first feign'd a god of war,
Sure prophesy'd of thee !

The figure of the actor should ever, if possible, justify the poet's description of the character. Garrick, who had ventured to act Pierre against Delane's Jaffier, refused the same part with Barry : ' I will not,' says Roscius, ' bully the monument.' — The great Mrs. Barry's Belvidera was one of those parts which obtained for her, as Downs says, the name of *famous Madam Barry*. The characters, which, this writer says, no man could see her act without being most tenderly affected, were Monimia, Belvidera, and Isabella in the Fatal Marriage. To her supreme excellence, in these and other parts, she owed a distinction unknown before to any comedian, a benefit-night, which she alone enjoyed for several years ; nor do I find, that even Betterton had that mark of public favour, till a year or two before his death.

About the year 1706, Wilks was cast into the part of Jaffier ; Mills, Pierre ; and Mrs. Rogers, Belvidera. This, actress after standing out a long siege of amorous courtship from Wilks, to save his life, as Cibber has it, she at length yielded up the fortress. The issue of their loves was a daughter, afterwards married to Ch. Bullock, by approbation of Wilks. A gentleman, who published the life of Wilks soon after his decease, gives us some odd anecdotes of the consequences arising from the lover's infidelity. The lady's resentment was wrought up to such a degree, that, when they acted together the parts of Jaffier and Belvidera, from their close embraces she left visible and bloody marks of her jealous resentment. This, however painful to Wilks,

Wilks, was sport to the audience ; the play was, for this reason, frequented much. To behold this strange perversion of courtship, where love was turned into spite, and jealous rage took place of conjugal embraces, brought crouds of curious spectators.

Mills acted Pierre so much to the taste of the public, that the applause, bestowed on him, in this part, exceeded all that was given to his best efforts in every thing else. The actors joined their voices to that of the public : I confess, I never saw Mills in Pierre without a great degree of approbation. Why he and Quin wore a white hat in this part I could not learn.

The politics of the theatre stand upon the same basis as those of a superior community. Interest and ambition equally occupy the inmates of a theatre and a court. The following anecdote is a picture of man at large.

Some time after Booth, by the interest of Lord Bolingbroke, had obtained a share in the patent of Drury-lane ; by putting himself into the part of Pierre, this eminent tragedian imagined he should acquire reputation and applause, eclipse the performance of Mills, and strengthen the play ; and perhaps revenge the affront Wilks had given him, by putting Mills constantly over his head, when in his power. One day, after rehearsal, he took an opportunity, in the presence of Cibber, to propose this plan of giving a new vigour to *Venice Preserved*. Wilks was so far from relishing the proposal, that he threw down his part of Jaffier in a rage, and solemnly protested he would never act it again. Perhaps he imagined Booth would bear away the general applause ; perhaps in the warmth of his temper, he thought that a blow was aimed at him and his friend, Mills, at the same time. But why

why should we not rather attribute his conduct to a more generous motive? Mills was an honest man, and his valued friend; the depriving him of a character, in which he constantly gained the favour of the people, he might reasonably conjecture, would lower his merit and lessen him in his own esteem. Booth, however vexed and disappointed, like an able politician, suppressed his anger, and submitted to act the part of Jaffier. He knew that Cibber would espouse the cause of Wilks on all occasions; for, however Colley may complain, in his Apology, of Wilks's fire and impetuosity, he, in general, was Cibber's great admirer; he supported him on all occasions, where his own passion or interest did not interpose; nay, he deprived the inoffensive Harry Carey of the liberty of the scenes, because he had in common with others, made merry with Cibber, in a song, on his being appointed poet laureat; saying, at the same time, he was surprised at his impertinence, in behaving so improperly to *a man of such great merit.*

During Booth's inability to act, which lasted from 1729 till his death, 1733, Wilks was called upon to play two of his parts,—Jaffier, and Lord Hastings in Jane Shore. Booth was, at times, in all other respects except his power to go on the stage, in good health, and went amongst the players for his amusement. His curiosity drew him to the play-house on the nights when Wilks acted these characters, in which himself had appeared with uncommon lustre. All the world admired Wilks, except his brother-manager: amidst the repeated bursts of applause, which he extorted, Booth alone continued silent.

If these two anecdotes are worth perusal, the reader owes them to Benjamin Victor, who, many years since, related them to me.

Mrs. Porter, I have said, was the excellent scholar of Mrs. Barry. From the time this great actress quitted the stage, till the year 1732, Mrs. Porter, as far as I can learn, represented the part of Belvidera, and never failed deeply to affect every audience. Booth was no admirer of Oldfield's tragedy, but was in raptures with Porter in the scenes of Belvidera. Every situation of this amiable character this actress filled with all the fine passion which the tenderest writer could inspire. She exceeded particularly in her agony, when forced from Jaffier, in the second act, and in the madness of the last.

In begging another embrace from Jaffier, when he is about to leave her for ever, her distress and anguish of mind were not to be described:

J A F F I E R.

This—and no more. [Kissing her.]

B E L V I D E R A.

— Another, sure another, !
For that poor little one you've ta'en such care of.
I'll give't him truly !

Nor should I forget her delicate manner of putting him in mind of his appointment in the third act.—

Remember twelve !

At the theatre of Lincoln's-inn fields, and afterwards at Covent-garden, *Venice Preserved* was supported by Ryan in Jaffier, Quin in Pierre, and Mrs. Seymour in Belvidera, who was succeeded by Mrs. Hallam.—These actors supported this favourite play, for many years, against their powerful rivals of Drury-lane. Ryan was, I believe, in Jaffier, a copier of Powel, whose manner he caught when very young; an actor whom his master, Rich, preferred

preferred to all he had ever seen. Quin acted Pierre as he supposed Booth would have done. In displaying the ardour of the brave and gallant soldier, in the first scenes, he was not so happy as in uttering his resentment of Jaffier's treachery in the fourth act.

Mrs. Seymour felt all the passions, and expressed them agreeably to their various powers, and in conformity to the action of the drama. In person she was tall and well made, but grew large as she advanced in life; her countenance was expressive,* and her voice pleasing and flexible. Her Belvidera was amongst those characters that contributed to raise her reputation. — Mr. Ryan was so strongly prejudiced in the opinion of Mrs. Seymour's merit, that, in a conversation I once had with him at the Bedford coffee-house, he assured me he thought her superior to all the actresses he had ever seen. Though we should think him too partial, in preferring Mrs. Seymour to Mrs. Oldfield and Mrs. Porter, yet surely she must have had a large share of merit to engage his judgment so strongly in her favour.

Mr. Garrick, when fixed in the management of Drury-lane, for reasons I have already adduced, resigned Pierre, in which part his fire and spirit were not equally supported by grandeur and dignity of person, for Jaffier, which he acted with great and deserved approbation many years. The temporary frenzy, with which Jaffier is seized, in the fourth act, on fancying that he saw his friend on the rack, has not since been equalled, nor perhaps ever will:

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—He

* Some idea of her features may be seen in Virtue's frontispiece to the tragedy of *Mariamne*.

— He groans ;
 Hark how he groans ! his screams are in my ears

Already ! See, they've fix'd him on the wheel !

And now they tear him ! Murder ! Perjur'd senate !

Murder !

The enthusiastic power of Garrick presented this dreadful image to the audience with such astonishing force, that they trembled at the imaginary picture. In all the softer scenes of domestic woe, conjugal tenderness, and agonizing distress, Barry, it must be owned, was Garrick's master.

Mossop's Pierre should not be forgotten ; his fine full-toned voice, and strong expression of sentiment, gave uncommon spirit to the warmth and passion of the character. Though short-sighted, his eye seemed piercing, and big with what his mind conceived. In the interview with the Conspirators, in the third act, he threw a gallantry into his action as striking as it was unexpected. In this scene, I should recollect, that, formerly, Pierre, after challenging the other Conspirators, addressed himself to one of them in the following terms :

Or thou ! with that lean, wither'd, wretched face !

And that an actor of a most unfortunate figure, with a pale countenance, stood up, with a half-drawn sword, and raised a general laugh in the audience. The famous Tony Aston, the itinerant comedian, was the last performer of this ridiculous part.

But Mossop excelled greatly in the vehement reproaches, which, in the fourth act, he poured with acrimony and force, on the treachery and cowardice of Jaffier. The cadences of his voice were equally adapted to the loudest rage and the most deep and solemn reflection, which he judiciously varied.

Mrs. Cibber was long the Belvidera of Barry and Garrick; her excellences are still fresh in the memory of a public who loved and admired them. Every situation of Belvidera seemed to be formed on purpose to call forth her great skill in awakening the passions. Mrs. Yates and Mrs. Crawford were no mean competitors of Mrs. Cibber in this, as well as many other parts which require equal abilities.

Mrs. Siddons has, in Belvidera, as well as many other parts, not only attracted the attention, but absolutely fixed the favour, of the town in her behalf. 'This actress,' like a resistless torrent, has borne down all before her. Her merit, which is certainly very extensive, in tragic characters, seems to have swallowed up all remembrance of present and past performers; but, as I would not sacrifice the living to the dead, neither would I break down the statues of the honourable deceased to place their successors on their pedestals. The fervour of the public is laudable; I wish it may be lasting, but I hope without that ingratitude to their old servants which will make their passion for Mrs. Siddons less valuable, as it will convey a warning to her, that a new face may possibly erase the impression which she has so anxiously studied to form and so happily made. The person of Mrs. Siddons is greatly in her favour: just rising above the middle stature, she looks, walks, and moves, like a woman of a superior rank. Her countenance is expressive; her eye so full of information, that the passion is told from her look before she speaks. Her voice, though not so harmonious as Mrs. Cibber's, is strong and pleasing; nor is a word lost for want of due articulation, which the comedian should always consider as his first duty, and esteem the finest conception of passion of no value without

out it. She excels all persons in paying attention to the business of the scene, her eye never wanders from the person she speaks to, or should look at when she is silent. Her modulation of grief, in her plaintive pronunciation of the interjection, oh! is sweetly moving and reaches to the heart. Her madness, in Belvidera, is terribly affecting. The many accidents, of spectators falling into fainting-fits in the time of her acting, bear testimony to the effects of her exertions.

She certainly does not spare herself. — Neither the great nor the vulgar can say, that Mrs. Siddons is not in *downright earnest*.

The actors have assured me, that the farces, which used to raise mirth in an audience after a tragedy, now fail of that effect from Mrs. Siddons's having so absolutely depressed the spirits of the audience, that the best comic actors cannot recal them into mirth or vivacity.

I have said, in the memoirs of Garrick, that Mrs. Crawford, in tragedy, knew the readiest way to the heart, and I will not retract; I will add, farther, that her comic humour is not much inferior to her tragic spirit. Miss Young's accomplishments, in the same book, I honestly and heartily acknowledged. This winter will perhaps excite such a laudable emulation amongst the actors, that the town will, in all probability, be as well entertained as they ever have been since the retirement of our great Roscius.

Mrs. Yates, I am informed, intends soon to quit the stage. The English theatre will long lament the loss of an actress, whose just elocution, noble manner, warm passion, and majestic deportment, have excited the admiration of foreigners and fixed the affection and applause of Britons.

Before

Before I finish my remarks on the actors of Venice Preserved, I think myself called upon to do justice to the merits of Mr. Brereton. All the tender and passionate situations of Jaffier it appears he had well studied; for, in every attitude, he expressed them justly. He was particularly happy in that masterly scene of varied passion and strong agony, in the fourth act, with Belvidera. It will not be saying too much of Brereton's Jaffier, that even those, who had been spectators of Garrick and Barry in the same character, could yet see him with pleasure. I could wish an actor of Mr. Brereton's merit would avoid tones in speaking which approach to something like singing. Of Mr. Bensley's Fierre I shall only observe, that his person is more against him than his conception of the part, which is very just.

The following anecdote, of Quin and Dr. W——, I was told many years since. The former was at Bath when the latter lived with Mr. A——, whose niece he had married. It was thought a respect due to so eminent a man as Quin, for Mr. A—— to invite him to dinner. After the cloth was removed, the divine entered into conversation with the player on the superior excellences of Shakspeare. Quin acceded to all that he said upon that topic, but begged to be heard a word or two in favour of Otway. He enlarged on his merits in the pathetic style; nay, in the satiric vein. ‘ How so, Mr. Quin?’ said the doctor.—He, looking archly on the great eagerness with which Mr. A—— swallowed every word of W——, pronounced emphatically the following passage in Venice Preserved:

Honest men
Are the soft easy cushions on which knaves
Repose and fatten.*

Quin knew well enough, that, in acting, Garrick was the doctor's idol, a partiality he could not easily forgive ; and, it is supposed, he bluntly embraced this opportunity to let him know his opinion of him. I must not forget to tell my readers, that old Jacob Tonson purchased the copy-right of *Venice Preserved* for *fifteen pounds!* What would such another play be worth now ?

* Act I. scene between Jaffier and Pierre.

Rival

Rival Queens,

OR

Alexander the Great.

CHAPTER XLII.

General opinion of the writer and his hero.—Addison.—Dryden and Lee.—Dryden's verses.—Lee's style.—Alexander's character;—unfairly represented by Pope and Boileau.—Alexander a builder of cities and a promoter of commerce.—Mr. Holwell and the bramins.—Le Brun and Lee.—Compliment to the action of Hart.—Rymer's opinion of Hart.—Rochester.—King Charles's preference of Mohun.—Plain Dealer.—Pinchwife.—Characters acted by Hart and Mohun.—The latter not mentioned in an agreement.—Joe Haines and a clergyman.—Haines dismissed by Hart.—Count Haines.—Tom Brown.—Dryden.—Anecdote of Haines, by Quin.—Hart and Nell Gwyn.—Bishop Tennison and Queen Mary.—Lee's pathetic reading.—Time, when Hart and Mohun died; unknown.—Betterton's modesty.—Mountfort.—Booth.—Delane.—Hulet.—His encounter with a chair.—His merits.—Custom of hemming.—His sudden death.—Quin's Clytus.—Mrs. Marshall and Mrs. Corbet.—Barry, &c.

THE general opinion, of the writer of this play and of his hero, is not very favourable to either. Lee was a mad poet, it is said, who described, in frantic

frantic verse, the actions of a mad hero.—But it is the opinion of the sober and judicious Addison, that, among our English poets, there was none who was better turned for tragedy than Lee, if, instead of indulging the impetuosity of his genius, he had restrained it within proper bounds.—Of all the poets of his time, Dryden seems to have had the sincerest regard and firmest friendship for this writer. With him he joined in composing the tragedy of the Duke of Guise, and the more celebrated Oedipus. His copy of verses, on the Rival Queens, contains, at once, a proof of warm affection and a fine apology for the exuberant style and extravagant flights of his friend :

Such praise is your's, while you the passions move,
 That 'tis no longer feign'd, 'tis real love,
 Where nature triumphs over wretched art ;
 We only warm the head, but you the heart.
 Always you warm ; and, if the rising year,
 As in hot regions, bring the sun too near,
 'Tis but to make your fragrant spices blow,
 Which in our colder climates will not grow.

Your beauteous images must be allow'd
 By all but some vile poets of the crowd :
 But how should any sign-post dauber know
 'The worth of Titian or of Angelo ?

Notwithstanding the fine poetic glow of friendship in these lines, and the sedate decision of Addison, I am afraid we cannot read thirty lines together, even in Lee's best pieces, without encountering absurdity in sentiment and solecism in expression : — blunder and beauty are so blended together, you know not how to separate them. His many turgid lines and incoherent thoughts make us admire his more happy and successful efforts. Lee, by the

the warmth of his temper, carries every passion to extreme: his love is dotage, and his anger madness. However, it must be confessed, that, in several of his plays, such as Mithridates, Theodosius, L. Junius Brutus, and Alexander, there is still enough to please, as well as to affect, the most critical audience. As long as the stage will be able to furnish good actors for his Alexander, it will draw together all ranks of people, from the heroic lover, and the lady of high rank, to the lowest of the people.

As to the hero himself, by the consent of all eminent historians, he was the greatest and the most generous of conquerors; nor must we regard the satire of Boileau and Pope as a genuine representation of fact or character. The latter has ill coupled the conqueror of Asia with the boorish Charles: *From Macedonia's madman to the Swede*. You might as well put in comparison the swift racer and the laborious cart-horse. So have I heard Garrick, in an ill humour, put the merits of Barry and Sparks together, which were very dissimilar.

Boileau goes farther than Pope; not satisfied with putting the conqueror of the world into a mad-house, he calls on the lieutenant de police to seize him and execute him as a felon:

Qu'on livre son pareil en France à la Reinie:
Dans trois jours nous verrons le phénix de guerriers
Laisser sur l'échaffaut sa tête et ses lauriers.

In my opinion, Voltaire too seriously refutes the poet's rhapsody. Boileau might reasonably have been asked, whether his master, Louis XIV. could not be justly termed the *pareil* of his Alexander,

der, whose ambition was less laudable than that of the Greek, because founded on more sordid motives. Let it not be forgotten, that Alexander, at a time of life subject to the turbulence of passion, and during the intoxication of conquest, founded and built more cities than all the other conquerors of Asia had destroyed; and that the man, whom the poets treat as a fool and a madman, absolutely changed and improved the commerce of the world. It is true, indeed, that our own Holwell, who lived thirty years among the bramins, and made himself master of their antient as well as modern language, assures, that their annals bear witness to the invasion of their country by Alexander; and that, in their dialect, they call him *robber* and *murderer*. But these pacific people, Voltaire observes, had no other idea of a warrior; and it is believed they bestowed the same titles on the kings of Persia themselves.

Lee, has artfully enough contrived to insert, in his tragedy, the most material events of Alexander's life: the death of Philotas, the passage of the Granicus, his conquests in India, his passion for Roxana, the death of Clytus, and many other transactions. Those, who have seen Le Brun's picture of Alexander's passing the Granicus, will justify the animated description of it which Cibber so improperly censures:

Can none remember! yes, I know all must,
When glory, like the dazzling eagle, stood
Perch'd on my beaver in the Granic flood!
When fortune's self my standard trembling bore,
And the pale fates stood frighted on the shore;
When the immortals on the billows rode,
And I myself appear'd the leading god!

Lee has, in the true spirit of poetry, clothed the beautiful and glowing figures of the pencil.

This tragedy was long the favourite of the court and city, especially when acted, as originally, by Hart, Mohun, Mrs. Marshall, Mrs. Boutell, and others.—Hart was so universally applauded in Alexander, that Downes has recorded a fine compliment paid him by a nobleman:—‘ That his action, in that character, was so excellent, that no prince in Europe need be ashamed to learn deportment from him.’ He adds, too, that, whenever Hart acted this part, the house was crowded as to a new play. The great critic, Rymer, declared, that such was the enchanting force of Mr. Hart’s action, such his ease, grace, majesty, and dignity, that he imposed upon the spectator the worst productions of the poet; who, from the accomplished behaviour of the actor, was deceived into an opinion of merit in the writer. Of Mohun I have already given Lord Rochester’s opinion; which coming from one of a capricious temper, who often praised one man from pique or envy to another, I should not so much rely on, if not confirmed by the general testimony. They were both great favourites of the king and courtiers. Sometimes, we must suppose, an emulation would be excited from a comparison made of their several excellencies. Charles, on seeing the performance of both in a new play, observed, to his courtiers, that Mohun, or Moon, as he pronounced it, shone, that day, like the sun, and Hart like the Moon. The latter was, in person, taller, and more genteel in shape, than the former; he seems to have claimed the lead in choice of characters. From Mohun’s generally acting grave, solemn, and austere parts, I should have cast him into

that

that of Manly in the Plain Dealer; but it seems Hart claimed it, and, to prove his right to it, addressed the audience in a plain-dealing prologue, full of severe censure on the pit.— In the same author's Country Wife, Pinch-wife, a part not unallied in humour to Manly, was acted by Mohun, and Horner by Hart. But these accomplished players were not confined to one walk, either in tragedy or comedy. Though Hart generally shone in the gay gentleman, such as Dorimant and Loveless in Sir Fopling Flutter and the Scornful Lady, Mohun acted, to great advantage, the lively and volatile Valentine in Wit without Money. I suspect, that these actors, who had been, from their youth, brought up almost together under two different masters in the profession of the stage, who had been fellow-soldiers in the cause of their royal master, and partners in the direction of the theatre, at last, by some unhappy difference, were alienated from each other; for, in the agreement, between Dr Davenant and Betterton on the one part, and Hart and Kynaston on the other, in the year 1681, the name of Mohun is not mentioned; that he was alive at that time we know from his having acted a part in Southern's Persian Prince, in 1682, before the two royal companies were united.

Hart was always esteemed a constant observer of decency in manners and a respecter of the clergy. That witty but debauched droll, Joe Haines, had persuaded a clergyman, into whose company he had introduced himself, that the players were a set of people who wished to be reformed; and that he could recommend him to be chaplain to the theatre, with a handsome yearly income;

income ; that he had nothing to do but to summon the company, by ringing a bell, to prayers every morning. This impudent trick was carried so far that the Clergyman was introduced by Haines, with a bell in his hand, behind the scenes, which he frequently rang, and cried out audibly, ‘Players ! players ! come to prayers !’ While Joe and some of the actors were enjoying this happy contrivance, Hart came into the theatre ; and, seeing the parson and his bell, soon found out the imposition ; he was extremely angry with Haines, whom he smartly reprendered, and invited the clergyman to dine with him ; he soon convinced him that Haines was an improper companion for a man of his function. Haines and Mr. Hart could not by any means agree ; the sober management of the latter did not suit with the irregular and vicious conduct of the former. Haines, not submitting to be governed by the established rules of the king’s theatre, was dismissed, and soon after received into Betterton’s company.* He was a wit, and a great joker, and writer of prologues and epilogues, many of which he spoke himself. The famous one, pronounced on the back of an ass, has often raised abundance of mirth, and was lately revived by some of our comedians ; though I think the jest is now so worn out, that a new one might be formed at no great expence of brains. Haines travelled, over several parts of Europe, with a gentleman, who, to enjoy his drollery, bore his expences : this got him the name of Count Haines. Tom Brown celebrates Haines as a jolly toper ; and employs him as a quack, in the infernal regions, to cure

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* Downs says, that, Haines having affronted Mr. Hart, he dismissed him.

the disorders of Erebus. Tom, likewise, from his envy or dislike of Dryden, makes out a whimsical dialogue between him and Haines, where their several conversions to popery are discussed with some pleasantry. From Haines's calling Dryden, several times in this dialogue, Poet *Squab*, a name originally given him by Rochester, we may guess at his make and form. By Dryden's ranking Haines with Oates, in the last line of his epilogue to the Pilgrim, revived for his son's benefit, it is evident he was displeased at being joined with this debauched player, and resents the affront in terms by no means to the honour of Haines.—Speaking of stage-reformation, he says:

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In short, we'll grow as moral as we can,
Save here and there a woman and a man:
But neither you nor we, with all our pains,
Can make clean work; there will be some remains,
While you have still your Oates, and we our Haines.

These, I believe, were the last lines which were written by this great poet, who died soon after; nor did Haines long survive him. As I shall not have many opportunities to mention this odd character, I will here quote an anecdote relating to him; which I heard from the mouth of Mr. Quin, in the green-room of Covent-garden, the winter when he and Garrick were engaged at that theatre.

Mr. Garrick was informing the company, then present, of his acting the part of Orestes, in the Distressed Mother, in Dublin. ‘In order,’ said he, ‘to gain a more accurate knowledge of the character, I waited on the author, Ambrose Philips, who lived not far from the metropolis. I begged him

him to inform me particularly concerning his intention in the mad-scene of Orestes. Philips told me, that, during his writing that part of the play, he was like a person out of his mind ; that he was so carried away by his enthusiastic rapture, that, when his friend, Mr. Addison came into the room, he did not know him ; and that, as soon as he recovered from his fit, he said to him,—‘ What Joe, is it you ?’—‘ That,’ said Quin, ‘ was to let you know how familiar he was with Mr. Addison. And this puts me in mind, Mr. Garrick, of a story I have heard related of a predecessor of our’s, that witty and wicked rogue, Joe Haines. In the reign of James II. the court was busy in making converts to the Roman Catholic faith, in which they had some success.—Some of the new papists pretended to have seen visions and dreamt dreams ; and, amongst the rest, Joe Haines, who professed himself a convert, declaring that the Virgin Mary had appeared to him. Lord Sunderland sent for Joe, and asked him about the truth of his conversion, and whether he had really seen the Virgin ?—Yes, my lord, I assure you it is a fact.—How was it, pray ?—Why, as I was lying in my bed, the Virgin appeared to me, and said, *Arise, Joe!*—You lie, you rogue, said the earl ; for, if it had really been the Virgin herself, she would have said *Joseph*, if it had been only out of respect to her husband.’

Hart was the first successful lover of the famous Nell Gwyn ; and from a seller of oranges, brought her to the stage, where she acted many years with the public applause. Her royal master, the indolent Charles, was so pleased with the charms of her conversation, that he more than shared his time between her and his mistresses of high rank ; nor was

was he ever better pleased than with the agreeable dalliances and sprightly witticisms of the charming Nelly. Some years since, I saw, at Mr. Berenger's house, in the Mews, a picture of this lady, said to be drawn by Sir Peter Lely ; and she appeared to have been extremely attractive. Charles with his last breath, recommended poor Nelly to his successor. She was good-natured, friendly, and charitable. Dr. Tennison, her parish priest, preached her funeral-sermon ; and, when some starch people objected to his promotion to the see of Canterbury on that account, the generous Queen Mary defended him ; saying, at the same time, that Tennison was so honest a man, that she believed all he said of Mrs. Gwyn was true.

Hart, when he gave up his interest, in the king's theatre, to Dr. Davenant, and Mr. Betterton, stipulated for a weekly salary of forty shillings, which he did not long enjoy. The stone put an end to his life ; but I cannot say, with any certainty, at what time.

Of this accomplished actor, the Tatler has preserved a very just remark on acting ; ‘ It was impossible,’ he said, ‘ that the player could ever act with grace, except he had forgotten that he was before an audience : till he was arrived at that, his motion, his air, his every step and gesture, have something in them which discovers he is under restraint, for fear of being ill received ; or, if he considers himself as being in the presence of those who approve his behaviour, you see an affectation of that pleasure run through his whole carriage.’

The great advantage, of playing an original character, is derived from the instructions of the author. From him the learning of the part must be communicated to his instrument, the player : if he is a master

master in his profession, he will, in his turn, impart useful hints to the poet, which will contribute to the improvement of the scene. Mohun, who acted Clytus in Alexander, Cibber tells us, had so high an opinion of Lee's power in recitation, that he threw down a part in despair of acting it up to the pathos of Lee's reading it.

Mohun was an able second to his friend, Hart, and equally admired for his great and profound knowledge in his profession. He is celebrated, by Lord Rochester, as the great *Aesopus* of the stage. The dignity of his step, said his lordship, mimics could imitate, though they could not reach the sublimity of his elocution. Cibber, who lived so near the times of Hart and Mohun, could possibly have collected something relating to these eminent players worthy our notice; at present, we cannot even say when they were born and when they died. The time of Mohun's death is not more known than that of Hart.

Betterton, after the re-union of the companies, acted Alexander with as much eclat as any of his other characters. This accomplished and yet modest player, when rehearsing this character, was at a loss to recover a particular emphasis of Hart, which gave a force to some interesting situation of the part; he applied, for information, to the players who stood near him. At last, one of the lowest of the company repeated the line exactly in Hart's key. Betterton thanked him heartily, and put a piece of money in his hand as a reward for so acceptable a service.

But Betterton, growing in years, soon resigned this laborious part to Mountfort, of whose merits, in acting lovers and heroes, Cibber speaks at large. On the unhappy murder of Mountfort, Betterton, says

says Cibber, resumed Alexander, and threw unexpected lustre on the part.—George Powell sometimes acted this favourite hero of the ladies with applause: Keen was his Clytus. Booth was too accurate a scholar, it seems, to act the mad Alexander, and, in my opinion, lost an opportunity of displaying, to advantage, the harmony of his voice, the vigour of his action, and the gracefulness of his deportment.

The play had lain dormant many years at all the theatres, when Mr. Delane, an actor from Dublin, in 1733, revived it, by his acting Alexander, with uncommon success, at the theatre in Goodman's-fields; where it was represented, for many nights successively, with much emolument to Mr. Giffard, the manager. Of Mr. Delane I have said as much as I thought necessary to point out his abilities in the Life of Garrick, who certainly did this actor no service by mimicking him in the famous simile of the boar and sow in the Rehearsal. His voice and manner were so exactly imitated, that the audience enjoyed the representation by repeated applause. Ch. Hulet acted Clytus with Delane at Goodman's-fields, as did Quin at Covent-garden. Hulet was apprentice to the famous Edmund Curl, the bookseller, where he learned very early the art of stage-murders; for Charles, acting the part of Alexander in the kitchen, with an elbow-chair for his Clytus, in his fury, with a poker in his hand instead of a javelin, broke it to pieces with such noise and violence,* that Curl, in the parlour, called out to know what was the matter: ‘Nothing, sir,’ said the apprentice, ‘but Alexander has killed Clytus.’

Hulet,

* Chetwood.

Hulet, by his master's permission, after he had served two years of his apprenticeship, tried his fortune on the stage at Lincoln's-inn-fields theatre. Here he remained several years; and met with encouragement from the public, with the patronage of Quin; but, his income not equalling his expences, he embraced Mr. Giffard's offer of a larger salary; and acted, at Goodman's-fields, many principal characters: such as Henry VIII. Falstaff, Othello, King in the Mourning Bride, Clytus, and Cassius in Julius Cæsar.

Hulet was an excellent Macheath; the songs in that part he sang more agreeably than Walker. He was happy in a fine, strong, clear, and melodious pipe; his being too sensible of this was the immediate cause of his death: he took an idle pleasure in stealing unperceived on a person, and deatening him with a loud hem, to shew the strength and firmness of his lungs. As he was practising this trick one morning at rehearsal, by an extraordinary effort he broke a blood-vessel, which killed him in twenty-four hours. Honest Lyon, a good comic actor, and so remarkable for a retentive memory, that he could repeat a news-paper, with all the advertisements, after reading it thrice over,* was present when this uncommon accident happened, and related it to me, many years since, with this addition: that Hulet, being much alarmed at the quantity of blood which issued from his mouth, was persuaded to go home; two eminent physicians were sent for immediately, who pronounced the case desperate, and would not prescribe.

Hulet

* Mr. H. Giffard gained a wager on a trial of Lyon's memory, by a repetition of a newspaper and all its contents.

Hulet was extremely corpulent, supposed to be owing to his drinking large quantities of porter and ale. He was a great feeder, extremely indolent, careless of his dress, not to say sordidly negligent of his person. In conversation he was lively and facetious, extremely good-natured, and a most excellent mimic ; but this talent of imitation he never exercised to the disadvantage of his fellow comedians. The public lost this valuable actor in the thirty-fifth year of his age. Quin acted Clytus with approbation ; but not in a manner more truly characteristic than Hulet. There was, in the latter's voice, more variety of tone, with strength equal to that of his competitor.

The Vanquisher of Asia never appeared to more advantage in representation, I believe, than in the person of Spranger Barry. He looked, moved, and acted the hero and lover, in a manner so superior and elevated, that he charmed every audience that saw him ; he gave new life and vigour to a play which had not been seen since the death of Delane. His address to his favourite queen was soft and elegant, and his love ardently passionate ; in the scene with Clytus, in his rage, he was terrible ; and, in his penitence and remorse, excessive. In his last distracting agony, his delirious laugh was wild and frantic, and his dying groan affecting.

William Powell had, from nature, many requisites to exhibit with propriety and skill, lovers and heroes : his person and voice were well adapted to them ; his ear was good, nor did he want anything but time to bring his judgment to maturity. In Alexander he was certainly inferior to Barry ; but his distance from that great actor was not disgraceful. If we take into our account the very short time he was on the stage, we shall be surprised at the great progress he made in the art he professed.

The

The original Rival Queens, Mrs. Marshall and Mrs. Bouell, were much celebrated, especially the first, who acted Roxana. She excelled in characters of dignity, and in expressing the strong emotions of the heart. The high sentiments of honour, in many of her characters, were correspondent to the dictates of her mind, and justified by her own private conduct. She was particularly admired in Roxolana, a character of heroic virtue, in one of Lord Orrery's plays.—Aubrey de Vere, Earl of Oxford,* was so charmed with Mrs. Marshall, that he pursued her in all the shapes a passionate and artful lover could assume. Distracted with the repulses his love received, he determined to seize her, by force, as she came from the playhouse; but she, being informed of his design, obtained a party of the king's guards to protect her. His lordship attacked her chair, but was repulsed. The adventure was spread over the town. The gentlemen, who claimed a sort of right to behave with freedom to the females of the theatre, were angry and disappointed; while the ladies were pleased, and much extolled the conduct of the stage heroine. The king himself interposed in her favour; and told the earl, that, although, by his own conduct, he had too much countenanced the vice, he thought it bad enough *with* the consent of the fair; but that violence was unpardonable in a sovereign, and still more so in a subject. The earl promised to think no more of her; but, in a few days, he renewed his addresses, assuring her he could not live without her; he was so charmed, he said, with her exalted virtue, that he had resolved, with her consent,

* History of the English Stage, 1743.

consent, to marry her. This bait Roxalana swallowed ; and the earl was married to her by his coachman in the dress of a clergyman. Soon after this pretended marriage, he took off the mask, told her the deceit, and bade her return to the stage. She threw herself at the king's feet, who commanded the earl to allow her a yearly income of 500*l.* nor would he permit his lordship to marry during the life of her son by him. The time of Mrs. Marshall's leaving the stage, and her death, is equally uncertain.

* Mrs. Boutell, the original Statira, was low in stature, had very agreeable features, a good complexion, with a childish look. Her voice was not strong, but pleasing and mellow ; she generally acted tender and innocent young ladies. By the generosity of her lovers, she was enabled to quit the stage before the approach of old age. A quarrel, between her and Mrs. Barry, after the union of the companies, concerning a veil, which the latter claimed for Roxana, and the other as strenuously demanded for Statira, had like to have proved of fatal consequence to the latter. She by the contrivance or interest of the wardrobe-keeper, carried off the veil triumphantly. The Rival Queens acted with much spirit and animosity. In the last act, Roxana struck Statira with such force, when she wounded her with the dagger, that it entered a quarter of an inch into the flesh. As it was well known these ladies were not vestals, it was reported jealousy gave force to the blow.†

Alexander's death is attributed, in the play, to poison ;

* History of the English Stage, 1741.

† Mrs. Crawford was so much in earnest, when she stabbed Dionysius, in the Grecian daughter, that Palmer felt the effects of the blow some months after.

poison; but, with more probability, we may place it to drunkenness.—The hero drank, at once, a cup which held fourteen pints: as he was attempting to mend his draught, by another equal quantity, he was seized with giddiness, and, soon after, died. †

In Lee's dedication of his *Alexander*, to the Earl of Mulgrave, we have a glaring, but genuine picture, of the manners of the age, from one who was a sharer in all its follies and irregularities:

— ‘An age, whose business is senseless riot, Neronian gambols, and ridiculous debauchery; an age, which can produce few persons, like your lordship, who dare be alone. All our hot hours are burnt in night-revels, or drowned by day in dead sleep.’ This was written in 1677.

Lee tried his fortune on the stage, in the character of Duncan, in *Macbeth*, but failed. Otway, much about the same time, played a King in one of Mrs. Behn’s plays; ‘but the sight of the audience so terrified him,’ says Downs, ‘that he was in a tremendous agony, and spoilt for an actor?’

† *Athenæus*.

'The Rehearsal.

C H A P. XLIII.

Middle comedy.—Buckingham's acquaintance with Ben Jonson.—An admirer of the old actors.—His opposition to the new taste in writing plays.—Play of the United Kingdoms.—*The Rehearsal*, when first acted.—Sir Robert Howard.—Simile of the turtles;—boar and sow.—*The family of Howard*.—Original actor of Bayes.—Dryden's dress.—Buckingham and Dorset.—Joe Haines's Bayes, with the recantation-prologue.—Estcourt, companion of Addison, &c.—His Bayes.—Old bill of the Rehearsal,—Heigh ho!—Estcourt's qualities.—Colley Cibber and the public at variance.—Weston.—Steele's character of Estcourt.—Remarks on Steele.—Mimics more dreaded than beloved.—Garrick and Foote.—Passage in the Spectator restored.—Dr. Ratcliffe.—Secretary Craggs and Sir Godfrey Kneller.—The Bayes of Colley Cibber.—Pope and Gay.—Bayes of Theophilus Cibber;—of Garrick;—of Foote.—How Buckingham lost the favour of Charles II.—Joe Ashe, the box-keeper.—Anecdotes of Buckingham.

THIS comedy, or farce of five acts, is of the same species with the middle comedy of the Greeks, in which characters of living persons are introduced with such attributes as make them known to the audience. Of this kind was the Poetaster of Ben Jonson, and the Satiro-mastix of Decker; most, if not all, of Mr Foote's pieces are of the same sort.

George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, the writer of this witty satire, was, when a boy, acquainted

quainted with Ben Jonson. He imbibed an early taste and regard for our best old dramatic poets, especially for Ben himself, and Beaumont and Fletcher; the name of Shakspeare I do not see in any part of his writings. He likewise was much prejudiced in favour of the comedians who acted at the Globe and Black Friers, whom he saw before the commencement of the civil wars; these he greatly admired and praised; they had struck his young fancy, and he preferred them to succeeding actors.

Soon after the Restoration, a great number of plays were written upon a new model; in which all resemblance of humanity was forgotten, probability was thrown out of sight, and monstrous births took the place of such productions as were founded on truth and nature. Buckingham, by his own personal opposition, and his interest with several gentlemen who were of high rank, tried to stem the torrent of high-flown nonsense and low ribaldry, which was the reigning taste. He once ventured so far, in exploding a play, written by the honourable Henry Howard, eldest son to the Earl of Berkshire, called the United Kingdoms, that he ran the hazard of his life. This play having in it a funeral, Mr. Bayes ridicules it in that part of the Rehearsal where he informs his friend, Johnson, that, as he would have no scenes alike in his play, the last act beginning with a witty scene, the next should begin with a funeral. Mr. Howard's play was absolutely condemned, and the author was prudent enough not to print it, by which he escaped all farther animadversion.

The Rehearsal was begun about the year 1663, and finished ready for acting two years after. The plague, in 1665, prevented its representation, so

that it did not make its appearance till 1671 ; then it came out with considerable alterations and improvements. The author, in his original plan, intended to have made Sir Robert Howard the principal character, by the name of Bilboa. But the great reputation of Dryden, who succeeded Sir W. Davenant in his office of poet-laureat, gave his grace a fair opportunity to expose the turgid rants and unmeaning bombast so frequent in the early dramatic works of that eminent writer.

The success of this satire more than answered the expectation of the author ; and indeed the Rehearsal is a very singular composition ; in one respect it is like Don Quixote, for it is acted and read with pleasure, though the absurdities ridiculed in it are no longer in being. For easy wit, gay ridicule, strong burlesque, and happy parody, our language can boast nothing like it. Such is the power of ridicule, it can make that appear a subject for laughter which is really in itself not so.

The parody of Dryden's simile of the turtles, in the second part of his Conquest of Granada, is a strong instance of the powers of ludicrous wit. As I shall not trouble my reader with many quotations from a play which is in every body's hands, I shall only give the simile and the parody upon it.

So two kind turtles, when a storm is nigh,
Look up and see it gathering in the sky ;
Each calls his mate to shelter in the groves,
Leaving in murmurs their unfinish'd loves ;
Perch'd on some dropping branch, they sit alone,
And coo, and hearken to each other's moan.

The parody :

So boar and sow, when any storm is nigh,
Snuff up and see it gathering in the sky ;

Boa
pet

Boar beckons sow to trot in chesnut-groves,
And there consummate their unfinish'd loves.
Pensive, in mud, they wallow all alone,
And snort and gruntle to each other's moan.

Dryden put the best face on the matter, and endeavoured to laugh at the grotesque picture drawn for him ; but, though he was wise enough to conceal his wound, he felt the smart of it. The revenge he took, in the character of Zimri, in his Absalom and Achitophel, which he drew for the author of the Rehearsal, is a proof that he was thoroughly angry.

Though Dryden's extravagant flights, in dramatic poetry, were chiefly aimed at in the Rehearsal, yet many authors of the times had a just claim to their share of satirical reprehension. The noble family of Howard was distinguished for dramatic productions, in which were to be found plots romantic and absurd, and characters, not drawn from nature, but wild and ungoverned fancy. To revive, in this place, the names of these exploded pieces, would be invidious ; those, whose curiosity may be excited to know them, will turn to the Key of the Rehearsal.

The original actor of Bayes was the celebrated John Lacy, a man of infinite comic humour, if we can trust to honest Downs and all traditional remembrance of him. How this character was dressed by Lacy is not now to be known. Dryden, it was said, was fond of wearing black velvet ; and we may suppose the player endeavoured to resemble him, as near as possible, in dress and deportment. I have heard, indeed, that the Duke of Buckingham and the Earl of Dorset prevailed on Dryden to accompany them, in the boxes, on the first night of acting the Rehearsal ; and placed the poet between them to enjoy the feelings of his mind

during the exhibition of his own picture. The peculiarities of Dryden, when he instructed the players, seems to be strongly marked through the whole piece.

The immediate successor of Lacy, in Bayes, is unknown. Joe Haines, on his return from his travels, acted Bayes; and spoke a recantation-prologue, in a white sheet, with a burning taper in his hand, upon his admittance into the play-house after his return from the church of Rome. This prologue was written by Tom Brown, for his friend Joe Haines. A few lines of this address to the public, by that pious penitent, will, I believe, satisfy the reader :

As you dislike the converts of the nation,
That went to Rome and left your congregation,
By the same rule, pray, kindly entertain
Your penitent lost sheep return'd again.
For re-converted Haines, taught by the age,
Is now come back to his primitive church, the stage.
I own my crime, of leaving in the lurch
My mother-playhouse :—she's my mother-church !

The celebrated Dick Estcourt, the companion of Addison, Steele, Parnel, (who honoured him, in a Bacchanalian poem, by the name of Jocus,) and all the learned and choice spirits of the age he lived in, acted Bayes during the government of the theatre by Wilks, Dogget, and Cibber. There cannot be a stronger proof, of the old custom of distributing the parts in a play according to the strength of the company, before the introduction of those exotics, the pantomimes, than the following bill of theatrical fare, which I produce from the first edition of the Spectator, published in numbers :

The part of Bayes by Mr. Estcourt ; Johnson
by

by Mr. Wilks ; Smith, Mr. Mills ; Prettyman, Mr. Powel ; Volscius, Mr. Cibber ; the Kings of Brentford, Bullock and Bowen ; Gentleman-usher, Pinkethman ; Physician, Crofs ; Tom Thimble, Dogget ; Fisherman, Johnson ; Pallas, Bullock ; Heigh ho ! Norris.

Here we have all the best comedians of the age grouped in this comedy ; and Norris, an excellent comic genius, the speaker of two lines only :

Heigh ho ! heigh ho ! what a change is here ! Hey day ! hey day ! I know not what to do nor what to say !

This odd soliloquy he uttered in such a manner, as to occasion his being termed by the audience, and announced in the bills, by the name of Heigh ho !

The original actor of this drowsy politician was one Shirley, and quoted by that name in the play. This man caused the whole audience to gape and yawn. He seems to have made himself, like William Peer, mentioned in the Spectator, famous for speaking a line or two.

Estcourt was so remarkable a genius, so celebrated for ready wit, gay pleasantries, and a wonderful talent in mimicry, that something more than barely mentioning him is due to his memory ; more especially as he was a man as much beloved for the goodness of his heart as admired for his various talents.

With respect to his stage-abilities, Colley Cibber speaks of them, in his Apology, but slightly. He confesses indeed that Estcourt understood a character well, though he had not, he said, acquired the art to do justice to it in the representation ; he instances particularly Falstaff. But Cibber and the public seemed widely to have differed ; for Estcourt's name is often placed in the bills for characters of consequence, at a time, too, when

Cibber

Cibber was a manager of the theatre. Nay, we see, that such was the confidence of the directors of the stage in his powers to please the public, that Cibber, who afterwards played Bayes, contented himself, during the life of Estcourt, with the inferior part of Prince Volscius. He was the original Serjeant Kite in the Recruiting Officer, Pounce in the Tender Husband, and of other parts of importance. Cibber, I doubt not, mixed a degree of envy in his criticism. Of a player's merits the public is a fairer judge than the most enlightened of his own profession. How often have I heard the merits of poor Weston questioned by actors of no mean capacity, when the people could never see him, on the stage, without paying him the tribute of what Cibber justly calls unbought applause, loud and involuntary laughter!

Honest Downs calls Estcourt *histrion natus*. ‘ He has the honour,’ says this historian, ‘ (nature enduing him with an easy, free, unaffected, mode of elocution,) in comedy, always to lætificate his audience, especially the quality.

Sir Richard Steele, who thought it not beneath him to be the intimate friend of Estcourt, has, in the Spectator,* drawn a most amiable picture of him. I shall quote some striking traits of his abilities: ‘ He had so exquisite a discerning of what was defective in any object before him, that, in an instant, he could shew you the ridiculous side of what would pass for beautiful and just, even to men of no ill judgment, before he had pointed at the failure. He was no less skilful in the knowledge of beauty; and I dare say, that there is no one, who knew him well, but can repeat more well-turned

turned compliments, as well as smart repartees, of Mr. Estcourt, than of any other man in England. This was easily to be observed in his inimitable faculty of telling a story; in which he would throw in natural and unexpected incidents, to make his court to one part, and rally the other part of the company; then he would vary the usage he gave them, according as he saw them bear kind or sharp language. He had the knack to raise up a pensive temper, and mortify an impertinently gay one, with the most agreeable skill imaginable.'

Steele farther observes, that it is natural for the wealthy to affix the character of the man to his circumstances; and to this alone he thought it was to be ascribed, that a quick wit in conversation, a nice judgment on any emergency, a most blameless and inoffensive behaviour, could not raise this man above being received upon the foot only of contributing to mirth and diversion.

Steele did not consider, that the man, who excels his company in wit and in the art of conversing, raises up so many rivals and enviers, who have nothing to console them but the low fortune of him who triumphs over their inferiority. Estcourt, very imprudently, I think, about a year before his death, opened a tavern *.—This enlarged his acquaintance, and, I believe, shortened his days: he, that sells wine and prepares dinners, is at the call of every company that visits his house. To some of these, the wit and gaiety of Estcourt might be agreeable; others would feel the degradation of themselves in the superior qualities of the tavern man. Let us quote what Steele says of his superlative excellence in mimicry.

* The Bumper tavern, in Covent-garden.

mimicry. ‘ What was peculiarly excellent in this memorable companion was, that, in the accounts he gave of persons and sentiments, he did not only hit the figure of their faces and manner of their gestures, but he would, in his narrations, fall into their way of thinking ; and this, when he recounted passages wherein men of the best, as well as such wherein were represented men of the lowest, rank in understanding. . . It is certainly as great an instance of self-love, to a weakness, to be impatient of being mimicked, as any can be imagined. There were none but the vain, the formal, the proud, or those who were incapable of amending their faults, that dreaded him ; to others he was in the highest degree pleasing.’

The people, who dreaded Estcourt and all mimics, were the greatest part of mankind ; and by such this man must have lived or starved. The select few, that were pleased with him, and had conquered their fear of his imitations, had superior excellences to cherish their self-love, and could look down with complacency on the inferior talents of their merry companion. Steele congratulates himself on the conquest he had gained over his impatience of being mimicked by Estcourt. The victory was not very easy, I dare believe ; for I never in my life saw any man bear the trial with Christian patience. Nay, the great takers-off themselves could not endure the retort courteous of mimicry in another.—Garrick and Foote, the great masters of the art, could not endure to see themselves in the very mirror they held up to others.

Estcourt was a favourite of the great Duke of Marlborough ; those, who know his grace’s character,

racter, will not be surprised that he did not improve his fortune by that distinction. When providore of the beef-steak club, composed of the chief wits and greatest men of the nation, he wore their badge, which was a small gridiron of gold, that hung about his neck with a green silk ribbon.

In the later editions of the Spectator, Steele concludes his account of Estcourt with a flow of tenderness very natural to a good heart, and a burst of tears: — ‘I wish it were any honour to the pleasant creature’s memory, that my eyes are too much suffused to let me go on.’ In the original edition, the conclusion stands thus: ‘It is a felicity his friends may rejoice in, that he had his senses, and used them as he ought to do, in his last moments. It is remarkable, that his judgment was in its calm perfection to the utmost article; for, when his wife, out of her fondness, desired she might send for a certain illiterate humorist, (whom he had accompanied in a thousand mirthful moments, and whose insolence makes fools think he assumes from conscious merit,) he answered, — You may do what you please, but he won’t come. — Let poor Estcourt’s negligence about this message convince the unwary of a triumphant empiric’s ignorance and inhumanity.

The triumphant empiric, I believe, was Dr. Ratcliffe. In this manner did the staunch whig, Sir Richard, discharge his party-spleen on the high-tory doctor; nor indeed could any thing be said too severely against the physician, who refused to attend the man in his sickness who had so often contributed to raise his mirth while in full health. That Ratcliffe was the person meant is

only conjecture ; but the character of *humorist* confirms me in my opinion ; for Ratcliffe would go to those only his present fancy approved ; nor would he stir to a lord, or even a crowned head, till his pipe was out *. Before I quit Estcourt, I must relate an anecdote, which will perhaps strengthen what I have said relating to mimicry. Secretary Craggs, when very young, in company with some of his friends, went, with Dick Estcourt, to Sir Godfrey Kneller ; and told him, that a gentleman in company would give such a representation of some great men, his friends, as would surprise him. Estcourt mimicked Lord Somers, Lord Halifax, Godolphin, and others, so very exactly, that Sir Godfrey was highly delighted and laughed heartily at the joke. Craggs gave the wink, and Estcourt mimicked Kneller himself ; who cried out immediately, *Nay, there you are out, man ! by G—, that is not me !*

Cibber succeeded Estcourt in Bayes ; and, by a stroke of satire which he threw into the part, provoked the vengeance of Pope, who never forgave it. It seems, the farce of Three Hours after Marriage, said to be written by Pope, Gay, and Arbuthnot, had been acted, soon after the accession of George I. with so little success, that Cibber and Oldfield had been severely handled by the audience. Our late king, George II. then Prince of Wales, commanded the Rehearsal ; and Colley could not forbear ridiculing one of the most unfortunate incidents in Three Hours after Marriage, which was the introducing into a physician's

* We may justly style that man a humorist, who told King William he would not have his two legs for his three kingdoms, nor would attend Queen Anne in her last illness.

fician's house two lovers of his wife in the shapes of a mummy and a crocodile. Though Pope, from an irritable temper, carried his resentment too far, yet surely Cibber should have remembered, both as a player and manager, he ought not to have insulted the work of any author ; it was sufficient mortification to him that the audience had condemned it. Mr. Pope was, we will grant Cibber, too intemperate in his language on the occasion ; but Cibber's upbraiding him with his form, in the following words, — ‘ Mr. Pope, you are so particular a man; that I should be ashamed to return your language as I ought to do, — was very gross and utterly unjustifiable. I have heard, that Mr. Gay resented the affront so strongly, that he replied to Cibber in something more feeling than words.

In acting Bayes, Colley Cibber was dressed like a smart coxcomb. In the delineation of the character, he made him sufficiently ridiculous ; but I thought he rather exhibited the laughter at Bayes's extravagances than the man that was enamoured of them.

His son, Theophilus, displayed more vivacity in Bayes than his father ; by the invention of new-raised troops, or hobby-horses, and other novelties, with some fresh jokes upon the actors, he drew the public to it for three weeks successively. But Theophilus mixed too much grimace and false spirit in his best-acted parts.

Mr. Garrick, when he first exhibited Bayes, could not be distinguished from any other gay well-dressed man ; but he soon altered it to a dress he thought more suited to the conceit and solemnity of the dramatic coxcomb. He wore a shabby, old-fashioned coat, that had formerly been very

very fine ; a little hat, a large flowing brown wig, high-topt shoes with red heels, a mourning sword, scarlet stockings, and cut-fingered gloves.

The difference, between Garrick and his immediate predecessors, was very conspicuous. They, by their action, told the spectators that they felt all the ridicule of the part ; he appeared quite ignorant of the joke made against him. They seemed to sneer at the folly of Bayes, *with* the audience ; the audience laughed loudly *at* him. By seeming to understand the satire, they caught at the approbation of the pit ; he gained their loudest plaudits, without letting them know he deserved it. They were in jest ; he was in earnest.

I have already said so much of Mr. Garrick's imitations of the actors, in voice and gesture, that I cannot add any thing more on that head.

The Bayes of Foote was an odd mixture of himself and the Duke of Buckingham ; the old building was new-faced with a modern front. He contrived to adapt, as well as he could, his new superstructure to the old ground-work. His fancy was so exuberant, his conceptions so ready, and his thoughts so brilliant, that he kept the audience in continual laughter. Public transactions, the flying follies of the day, debates of grave assemblies, absurdities of play-writers, politicians, and players, all came under his cognizance, and all felt the force of his wit ; in short, he laid hold of every thing and every body that would furnish merriment for the evening. Foote could have written a new Rehearsal equal to the old.

Of Buckingham's moral and political character I have spoken fully, and, I am convinced, justly,

in my observations on the Orphan. I there gave the reader some account of the great affection which Charles II. manifested for this eccentric wit. It now remains that I unfold the cause which dissolved the seemingly inviolable attachment of the king to his favourite. The parliament, which had been firm to Charles whilst they had the least prospect of his adhering to the constitution, in church and state, as then established, on discovering that his war with Holland was carried on with no other view than to establish despotism, and to ruin, in conjunction with France, the Protestant interest and religion, boldly broke through all forms, and attacked his ministry, composed of the famous Cabal. Buckingham desired he might have leave to vindicate himself before the house of commons. In his defence, he laid the blame of his conduct on the king and the duke of York, by a witty allusion to them both. Amongst other things, he said, ‘ hunting was a good diversion ; but, if a man would hunt with a brace of lobsters, he would have but ill sport.’ People understood, that, by the lobsters, the royal brothers were meant. ‘ And this speech,’ says Burnet, ‘ lost him the king’s favour so effectually, that he never recovered it afterwards.’ Thus we see, that a man of wit, and master of the joke, could safely offend against all laws human and divine, and yet retain his sovereign’s favour ; but, the moment he placed his conduct in a light that rendered it an object of ridicule, the royal countenance is withdrawn from him, and irreconcileable hatred succeeds to the appearance of the most unalterable friendship ! It is well known, that Buckingham spoke often of the king most contemptuously ; nor did Charles value the duke

duke for any thing but the happy talent of giving a ludicrous turn to every thing that was serious.

In a letter to Lord Berkley, Buckingham desired him to tell a certain lady, that he had resolved to swear by no other than Joe Ash; ‘and, if that,’ said his grace, ‘be a sin, it is as odd an one as ever she heard of.’ Joe Ash was, it seems, a box-keeper at Drury-lane play-house. How this man could merit this distinction I know not, unless he lent the duke money to supply his necessities, which were often very urgent. Box-keepers, whatever they may be now, by the managers keeping an eye over their conduct, were formerly richer than their masters. A remarkable instance of it I heard many years since. Colley Cibber had, in a prologue, or some part of a play, given such offence to a certain great man in power, that the playhouse, by order of the lord-chamberlain, was shut up for some time, Cibber was arrested, and the damages laid at ten thousand pounds. Of this misfortune Booth and Wilks were talking very seriously, at the playhouse, in the presence of a Mr. King, the box-keeper; who asked if he could be of any service, by offering to bail Cibber.—‘Why, you blockead,’ says Wilks, ‘it is for ten thousand pounds.’—‘I should be very sorry,’ said the box-keeper, ‘if I could not be answerable for twice that sum.’ The managers stared at each other; and Booth said, with some emotion, to Wilks, ‘What have you and I been doing, Bob, all this time? A box-keeper can buy us both.’

An anecdote or two of the witty writer of the Rehearsal, and I have done! Father Petre promised K. James to make a convert of Buckingham to popery. He began by attacking the imagination in its weakest part, fear: ‘We, my lord,’ said the Jesuit,

Jesuit, ‘ deny that any can possibly be saved out of our church ; your grace allows that our people may be saved.’—‘ No, curse you ! said the duke, ‘ I make no doubt but you will be all damned to a man.’ At this Father Petre started, and said very gravely, ‘ I cannot argue with a person so void of all charity.’—‘ I did not expect, my reverend father,’ said the duke calmly, ‘ such a reproach from you, whose whole reasoning was founded on the very same instance of want of charity in yourself.’

The Duke of Queensbury, in his journey to Scotland, heard that Buckingham lay at a certain inn, not many miles from the road, in an illness from which he could not recover. His grace charitably paid the sick man a visit, and asked him if he would have a clergyman. ‘ I look upon them,’ says Buckingham, ‘ to be a parcel of silly fellows, who do not trouble themselves about what they teach.’ Queensbury then asked, if he would have *his* chaplain, who was a presbyterian. ‘ No,’ said Bucks, ‘ these fellows always made me sick with their whine and cant.’ Queensbury, taking it for granted that he must be of some religion, and, of consequence, a Roman Catholic, told him there was a popish lord in the neighbourhood, and asked him if he should send for a priest. ‘ No,’ says the dying man, ‘ these rascals eat God ; but, if you know of any set of fellows that eat the devil, I should be obliged to you if you would send for one of them.’*

I must not forget, that the celebrated Mrs. Mountford, the female Proteus in acting, who assumed

* Richardson,

sumed all characters and became them all, acted Bayes with vivacity and humour; and that Mrs. Clive, some forty years since, attempted the same part for the benefit of her brother, Mr. Raftor; but the public thought Bayes in petticoats, in a lively farce of her own writing, became her much better.

Congreve.

Congreve.
OLD BATCHELOR, &c.

C H A P. XLIV.

Congreve formed upon Wycherly.—Conduct of his fables.—Papists and Dissenters.—Wycherly transcribed the manners of the times.—King, court, and poets, pimps combined.—Dryden's opinion of court and poets.—Wycherly's private character.—Old Bachelor;—its characters.—Cuckold a favourite dish.—Lord Kaims.—Double Dealer;—Dryden's verses upon it.—Dedication of the Double Dealer.—A leash of cuckolds.—Maskwell.—Lady Touchwood.—Lord Froth.—Lord Plausible.—Froth's opinion of laughter.—Lord C.—Various species of laughter.—Dimplers and smilers.—House of commons and the theatre.—Lady Froth and Brisk.—Woodward and Mrs. Clive.—Miss Pope.—Mrs. Green.—Clive's superior excellence.—Love for Love; its great merit.—Sir Sampson Legend.—Foresight, a character of humour.—Ben a wit.—Pope.—Tattle.—Mrs. Frail.—Doris.—Angelica not amiable.

CONGREVE formed himself upon Wycherly; but his wit is more flowing, his fancy more exuberant, his knowledge more extensive, and his judgment more profound; though he is by no means a strict observer of the unities, the conduct of his fables is well studied, and sometimes exact; his catastrophes are generally perplexed and sometimes improbable.

When Congreve began to write, the licentious manners, introduced by Charles II. were in full vigour;

vigour ; the passion to establish popery, in the reign of his successor, had not diminished the immorality of the people. The great view of James was the converting his subjects to his own superstition ; to which, I believe, he was the more devoted, as he fancied their imbibing his religious creed would render them more submissive to his government. Papists, like other dissenters, when in a state of persecution, or deprived of benefits which they ought to enjoy, will endeavour to gain a mitigation of their hardships by contributing to support every scheme of government with their utmost weight and interest ; remove the clogs that separate them from the rest of the people, and papists will be as staunch friends to liberty as any other subjects.

Wycherly, it is plain, was the original which our young poet admired and copied. Wycherly faithfully transcribed the manners of the times when the king and his courtiers, in conjunction with the poets, were the pimps to debauch the morals of the people. Dr. Johnson styles Wycherly a scribbler, from an honest indignation at the impurity of his writings ; but surely the comedies of Dryden, Otway, and others, are not less exceptionable than his. He, like others, was borne down by the common current, which was rendered irresistible by royal patronage and protection. To this, Dryden himself ascribes the vicious writings of the poets :

The poets, who must live by courts, or starve,
Were proud so good a government to serve ;
And, mixing with buffoons and pimps profane,
Tainted the stage for some small snip of gain ;

For they, like harlots under bawds profess'd,
 Took all th' ungodly pains and got the least.
 Thus did the thriving malady prevail ;
 The court its head, the poets but the tail.
 Misses there were, but modestly conceal'd :
 Whitehall the naked Venus first reveal'd ;
 Where, standing as at Cyprus, in her shrine,
 The strumpet was ador'd with rites divine *, &c.

Few men were so admired, and beloved by his contemporaries, as Wycherly : he was esteemed the most accomplished gentleman of the age he lived in, and, as such, courted and caressed by his royal master.

Congreve was endowed with all the strong faculties of perception which enable the comic writer to describe the various characters of mankind. He seems to have known the foibles, passions, humours, and vices, of the world by intuition. His Old Batchelor was acted when he was twenty-one ; in his dedication, he tells Lord Clifford that it had lain by him almost four years. Dryden and Southern were astonished when they perused this play, and pronounced it a prodigy of early genius. In the Old Batchelor, we perceive, that, from Ben Johnson's Bobadil and Master Stephen, the author has formed his Captain Bluff and Sir Joseph Wittol. His gentlemen are partly his own and partly taken from Wycherly. Bellmour and Sharper are allied to Horner and Freeman, in the Country Wife and Plain Dealer. Vainlove, who loves no pleasure that is not to be obtained without difficulty, is a character of humour ; and so, I think, is Heartwell, who resembles

* Dryden's epilogue to the Pilgrim.

semblies, in some of his features, Pinchwife in the Country Wife.

I cannot think, with Dr. Johnson, that Heartwell is a fictitious character. Many such may be seen, who, having, from spleen or positiveness of disposition, denied themselves, in early life, the pleasures of the conjugal union, growl out the remainder of their days in satirical reflections on the happiness they have rejected. The scene between the Old Batchelor and Sylvia, in the third act, is a masterpiece.—The audience, in Congreve's time, were particularly fond of having a city-cuckold dressed out for their entertainment ; and Fondlewife is served up with very poignant sauce, for the several incidents in the scene are extremely diverting. Lord Kaims finds fault with the dialogue, in the first act, between Bellmour, Sharper, and Heartwell, as if it was mere conversation, and that the business of the play stood still ; but what business is more necessary than the knowledge of character ? the manners of the personæ dramatis are by such dialogues unfolded to the audience. The same objection may be raised against some interviews of the Prince of Wales and Falstaff, in Henry IV.

The Double Dealer was acted a year after the Old Batchelor. This comedy was ushered into the world by a copy of verses, to his dear friend, Mr. Congreve, by Dryden. In this address, he freely acknowledges the superior genius of the old dramatic writers, with a fine compliment to the author of the Double Dealer, who alone supplies all those excellencies which were deficient in the writers of Charles II.'s reign. The pathetic conclusion, every man of taste, though he

has

has often read it, will be pleased to see inserted here :

Maintain your post, that's all the fame you need,
For 'tis impossible you should proceed.
Already I am worn with care and age,
And just abandoning th' ungrateful stage *.
Unprofitably kept at Heav'n's expence,
I live a rent-charge on his providence.—
But you, whom ev'ry muse and grace adorn,
Whom I foresee to better fortune born,
Be kind to my remains,—and, oh ! defend,
Against your judgment, your departed friend !
Let not th' insulting foe my fame pursue,
But shade those laurels which descend to you ;
And take for tribute what these lines express ;
You merit more, nor could my love do less !

In his dedication of the Double Dealer, to Montague, afterwards Earl of Halifax, the author, though he owns he failed in his attempt, says, he designed to have written a regular comedy. But he soon takes courage to assert, that he has not miscarried in the whole; he had resolved, he says, to preserve the three unities. Then, in a luscious style, he heaps abundance of nauseous flattery on his patron ; and indeed I think Congreve as awkward a dedicator as any in our language.— When he has finished his panegyric, he tells us, that he hearkened after objections ; but like his friend, Dryden, he can find none worth answering ; yet he goes on answering several of them. At last he becomes humble, and begs the critic to re-consider his remarks. But what shocks our author most, is the offence he has given to the ladies ; for he would rather offend all the critics in

* His last play, of Love Triumphant, or Nature will prevail, was acted the same year with the Double Dealer.

in the world than one of the fair sex. And yet I think his defence is a very poor one, and amounts to little less than owning his fault ; for surely, out of the whole sex, he might have chosen much better representatives of it than the ladies in the Double Dealer.

The manners of this play are more licentious than those of the Old Batchelor.—His cuckold, Fondlewife, in that comedy, pleased the town so greatly, that he determined to give the audience a leash of them in his Double Dealer ; for he has presented them with no less than three. A father, talking obscenely to his daughter, is something monstrous, and almost incredible ; and yet Sir Paul Pliant's instructions, to the only virtuous woman in the play, are of that kind.

Maskwell's character is partly taken from Syrus, in the *Heautontimorumenos* of Terence, who, by uttering truths, carries his point more covertly to deceive ; and partly, I think, from the Timantus of Fletcher's Cupid's Revenge ; as Lady Touchwood greatly resembles Bacha in the same play. Brisk's pertness is not unlike the petulance of Novel in the Plain Dealer, and Lord Froth's solemnity is an improvement of Lord Plausible's starch civility in the same play.

The plot is extremely intricate, and exacts from the spectator very deep attention ; without it, he will not be able to see how it is unravelled in the catastrophe.

Double Dealer. ACT I. Scene IV.

L O R D F R O T H.

There is nothing more unbecoming a man of quality than to laugh;—it is such a vulgar expression of the passions!—Every body can laugh.

Of the same sentiment, with respect to laughter, was a late very accomplished nobleman, who, by his own example, justified the doctrine of Lord Froth. A genuine laugh is as difficult, I believe to be had, as a generous tear.—Nature, by our frame, intended both for the purposes of humanity. There is certainly much hypocrisy in pretending to assume either; but the feigned laugh is less censurable than the vile crocodile's tears. An assenting half-laugh, or smile, is as much expected from an acquaintance as a bow or a shake of the hand. From a Lord C. who wore a mask all his life-time, and taught his only son to do the same, nothing sincere, either in grief or mirth, was to be expected. The man, who strives to repress the natural impulse which ridicule excites, never knew the happiness which the tear of pity for the unfortunate bestows.

The *Guardian* has written an excellent paper, with much pleasantry and humour, on the several sorts of laughers, which he arranges under the following heads:—the dimplers, the smilers, the laughers, the grinners, and the horse-laughers. Lord Froth and Lord C. are of the second species. The dimple, says this writer, was, by the ancients, termed the Chian laugh;—and this he gives to the prudes. For my part, though I am not fond of the grin, which is generally practised by snarlers, or those who wish to shew their teeth, nor the Sardonic, which Steele says is the Greek and

and Roman horse-laugh, yet I am no enemy to what he calls the *risus* of the antients, which is the same as our hearty laugh. If the sect of dimplers and smilers prevail, we shall have no mirth but what the house of commons or the theatre can give. There we are certain to have a full chorus of laughers.

Act III. Scene the Tenth.

Lady Froth. Brisk.

B R I S K.

Besides your ladyship's coachman having a red face—

When this play was acted at Drury-lane, about five and twenty years since, an accidental or wilful blunder of Woodward, who acted Brisk in a lively and diverting manner, caused such repeated laughter in the theatre as I scarcely ever heard.—Mrs. Clive, who acted Lady Froth, had, by mistake, or in a hurry, laid on more rouge than usual ; and Brisk, in his criticism on the lady's heroic poem, instead of saying, ‘ Your coachman having a red face,’ said, *Your ladyship having a red face.* This was no sooner uttered, than peals of laughter were redoubled over the theatre. Woodward affected to look abashed and confounded ; Clive bore the incident heroically. When they retired to the green-room, from the stage, they were followed by the players, who expected a scene of violent altercation ; but this inimitable actress disappointed them : ‘ Come, Mr. Woodward,’ she gravely said, ‘ let us rehearse the next scene, lest more blunders should fall out.’ Clive was in Lady Froth, as in the rest of her comic characters, superior

rior to all actresses. Happy was that author who could write a part equal to her abilities! she not only, in general, exceeded the writer's expectation, but all that the most enlightened spectator could conceive. By her encouragement and instructions, and her own industry, Miss Pope is become a valuable actress; but genius cannot be communicated. Mrs. Green, of all the female players, in comic humour came the nearest to this admirable comedian. It was Mrs. Green's misfortune to live at the same time with Clive. I shall as soon expect to see another Butler, Rabelais, or Swift, as a Clive.

By consent of all the critics, Love for Love is esteemed not only the most excellent of Congreve's plays, but one of the best in our language. His characters are drawn with such strength and comprehension, that his comedies are perpetual commentaries on the passions and humours of mankind. The punishment of an unnatural and hard-hearted parent is the moral aim of the poet; and in this he has, by a judicious conduct of his plot, fully succeeded.

Sir Samson Legend is a finished portrait of an ill-natured wit. Foresight is, I think, a character of humour; there were, it is true, in his time, many persons infected with judicial astrology; even the name of Dryden has ennobled the insignificant scöt; but Foresight is made up of dreams, nativities, and superstitions of every kind. A ridiculous dread of futurity goes through his whole life; and, as Bluff, in the old Bachelor, says 'fighting is meat, drink, and cloth, to him,' so is omen-hunting to Foresight. But the number of the superstitious does not abate the humour of a character:—Cervantes wrote his Don Quixote, not with the view of curing one man infected with the spirit of knight-errantry,

errantry, but a large number of Quixotes. A single character is a monster not worth a writer's aim.

There is surely an absurdity in making the son of a knight a common sailor or foremast man; perhaps the author thought he could not raise so much mirth from the midshipman as a dealer in forecastle conversation. The character is well calculated to excite much laughter, and to carry on the fable with comic spirit; but Ben is not a humourist; he is, what Angelica terms him, an absolute sea-wit; his being a sailor is a matter of accident. The author, in his prologue, owns he took fire from the manly scenes of the Plain Dealer. Scandal is introduced, as a second Manly, to satirize the vices of the age; he performs his office with the true spirit of a reformer; for he absolutely forgets good manners, and, as to good-nature, that is not to be expected from a censor. Tattle is an original coxcomb, who, in the midst of his prattlings, brags of secrecy. Mr. Pope has questioned whether Congreve's fools are really such:

Tell me if Congreve's fools are fools indeed!

The mere fool is no object of common satire. Though Congreve has given something like wit to his fops, on examination you will find that it is only the colour of it; it is the Bristol stone, but not the diamond. Brisk, in the Double Dealer, is so lively a coxcomb, that you are surprised into an opinion of his being something better than he is: Tattle is merely whipt syllabub and an empty phantom of liveliness.

The ladies in this play are Congreve's ladies, most of them vicious and abandoned. Mrs. Frail, a woman of the town, as he calls her in his dramatic personæ, is a main instrument to carry on the plot.

plot. Mrs. Foresight, *her sister every way*,* who is so generous as to forget in the morning, the favours she grants her lovers over-night, is the much-boasted Doris of this writer. If the character were really original, I should join the cry of its celebrators, for the thought is obvious; but, if the reader will turn to Otway's Friendship in Fashion, he will find Mrs. Foresight is only an improvement of Lady Squeamish.† The author's favourite is Angelica, who at last rewards Valentine with her person and fortune: but that mistress is not an amiable character, who drives her lover to the brink of despair, and is satisfied with nothing less than his signing to his own ruin as a proof of his passion.

* Love for Love, Act II.

† Tom Brown makes Mrs. Barry, the celebrated actress, a perfect Doris. He says, that she did not know the lover who gave her five guineas over-night, unless he brought the same sum in the morning. But Tom had an insuperable itch for scandal. Tom Brown's Works, vol. III. p. 36, 9th ed.

C H A P. XLV.

Religion and politics.—Ministers sore about politics.—A great lawyer.—The Revolution and Union.—House of Brunswick.—What ministers and magistrates are knaves or fools.—Mount Vesuvius.—Lady Mary Wortley Montague.—Smith.—His return to the stage;—death and epitaph.—Verbruggen.—Bowen and Quin.—Ryan.—Walker.—Kynaston.—Powell's sarcasm on his acting.—Kynaston's son and grandson.—Mrs. Bracegirdle.—Congreve's affidivities.—Mrs. Bracegirdle courted by the dramatic lovers of Rowe and Congreve.—Her excellent character.—Tom Brown.—Curl.—Dr. Arbuthnot.—Why Mrs. Bracegirdle left the stage.—Wanton Wife.—Mourning Bride—Critics.—Dryden.—Characters of the Mourning Bride—Scene in the second act.—Almeria's speech;—compared with the soliloquy of Juliet.—Taswell, a speaker of tragedy.—Congreve and the Greek dramatists.—Osmyn's soliloquy.—Congreve's tragic obscenity.—Way of the World:—Plot, characters, actors, &c.

Love for Love. Act IV. Scene X.

VALENTINE, [ASSUMING MADNESS.]

What are you for, religion or politics? There is a couple of topics for you, no more like one another than oil and vinegar; and yet these two, beaten together, make sauce for the whole nation.

SIR Harry Savil, when a French nobleman boasted of the great freedom of conversation they enjoyed

enjoyed in France, observed to him, that his countrymen were deprived of the two only topics which deserved the people's discussion, religion and politics.

Our ministers of late, I do not mean the present*, have been extremely tender on the subject of politics; as for religion, they let that shift for itself. Not many years since, a great lawyer gave it as his opinion, on a public occasion, 'That no honest man talked politics.' This, in a free country, is surely very strange doctrine! Without politics, we should have been deprived of that great blessing, the Revolution; without politics, the kingdoms of Great-Britain would not have been united; nay, more, without the same medium, the illustrious house of Brunswick would not have ascended the throne of England. The great lawyer knew this; and yet durst, in the face of day, broach such a slavish doctrine. That minister, or magistrate, who would debar Englishmen the liberty of speech, can neither be wise nor honest. The people, who have a free licence to debate on all topics, are less dangerous to their governors than those who are deprived of that blessing. Mount Vesuvius is never so alarming when its eruptions are free as when the internal contents are struggling in the crater, and restrained from their regular vent and discharge.—The great lawyer's doctrine is fitter for the meridian of Constantinople than London: if, in that metropolis, the coffee-house politicians presume to arraign the conduct of the minister, they are, says Lady Mary Wortley Montague, immediately dispatched, and the house burnt to the ground.

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The man, whose abilities every body admires, but whose politics are universally condemned, should have recollect^d, that to politics he owed his seat in parliament, and might possibly have been obliged to an English cobler for his vote.

In these three comedies, the parts were acted by some of the best comedians that ever belonged to a theatre. Colley Cibber has drawn most of their characters in a style so expressive of their several abilities, that the memory of them will be transmitted to future times ; of some he has made but slight mention. The cause of Smith's leaving the stage he has related ; but of his return to it, and death, he has taken no notice.— When Betterton seceded from Christopher Rich, and opened, by subscription, a theatre in the Tennis-court, Lincoln's-inn-fields, Smith, who had not acted for several years, was persuaded, by his friends of distinguished rank, to return to the stage. It is said, that the intreaties of his old acquaintance and fellow-labourers, Betterton and Mrs. Barry, had greater weight with him than the influence of his noble friends. Scandal was his first part ; continued shouts of applause witnessed the satisfaction which the audience felt on seeing their old friend return to them. But their pleasure was not of long continuance ; for soon after, on the fourth day of Cyrus the Great, a new tragedy by Banks, Downs informs us, that Mr. Smith was taken ill and died. Chetwood relates, that, being seized with the cramp in the night, he jumped out of his bed, and was so long walking about his chamber in the dark, that he caught a cold which ended in a distemper that brought him to his grave.

Booth, in his elegant Latin epitaph on Smith, speaks of his professional abilities, his just administration of the stage, his affability and condescension, as if he had been perfectly acquainted with him. But, when Smith died, Booth was a Westminster scholar, and in his fourteenth year; the character of this eminent comedian must have been drawn up from such information as the writer, in his riper years, obtained.

Verbruggen, who was employed in no less than four of Congreve's plays, was an actor of more merit than Cibber was willing to allow; for, in his Apology, he slightly mentions him as a person much inferior to the actors whose praises he had recorded. I shall hereafter have occasion to speak of him more fully. Bowen, who played Setter in the Old Batchelor, Jeremy in Love for Love, and Witwou'd in the Way of the World, a comedian of some merit, remarkable for the loudness of his voice, was unhappy in a choleric disposition. This man fell in company with Quin, at a public-house, much frequented at that time by players, near Clare-market. He reproached Quin for leaving Drury-lane playhouse; and for his acting the part of Tamerlane, at the theatre in Lincoln's-inn fields, once only.—Quin, in return, told him, that Mr. Jonson, who had acted Jacomo, in the Libertine Destroyed, a single night, had greatly surpassed him, who had often played the part. After some farther altercation, Bowen retired to a neighbouring tavern, and sent for Mr. Quin. Upon his entering the room, Bowen shut the door, and drew his sword, bidding him draw his. Quin remonstrated against this sudden violence, but in vain; and, in defending his own life, mortally wounded Bowen; who,

when

when his rage was cooled by the loss of blood, owned that he had been the aggressor. I have not the trial before me, and therefore cannot be absolutely sure that I have minutely described this unhappy business; but the main part is, I am confident, according to matter of fact. Quin was tried at the Old Bailey, and honourably acquitted.

This accident fell out in 1718. It is remarkable that Ryan, about a month after, underwent a like trial at the same place, for killing a man, in his own defence, at a public house; and was also acquitted with honour. Walker, the original Macheath, was brought to the same bar, I believe at a period not very distant, for the murder of a bailiff; he was acquitted by the jury, but whether with the same honourable circumstances I know not.

Kynaston, who is characterised by Cibber, as a very original performer, was taken ill during the first representation of the Double Dealer. When he retired from the stage is not known; I find him among the *dramatis personæ* of Dryden's Love Triumphant, acted soon after Congreve's Double Dealer, and in Banks's tragedy of Cyrus the Great.

Notwithstanding the high encomium, bestowed on this actor in Cibber's Apology, I have been informed, by some of the old comedians, that, from his early representation of women's characters, Kynaston had contracted some disagreeable tones in speaking, or what we term canting.—When George Powell was once discharging the intemperance of the preceding day from his stomach, during the time of action Kynaston asked him if he was sick.—‘ How is it possible to be otherwise,’ said Powell, ‘ when I hear you speak?’

Kynaston

Kynaston died wealthy ; he bred his only son a mercer, who lived in Covent-garden ; father and son were buried in that parish. The Reverend Mr. Kynaston, the grandson, I have seen ; but this gentleman thought it no honour to be the descendant of a player, and would not communicate any anecdotes of his ancestor. He purchased the impropriation of Aldgate.

Mrs. Bracegirdle was the favourite actress of Congreve and Rowe. In the several lovers they gave her, in their plays, they expressed their own passion for her. In Tamerlane, Rowe courted her Selima, in the person of Axalla ; in the Fair Penitent, he was the Horatio to her Lavinia ; and, in Ulysses, the Telemachus to Bracegirdle's Semanthe. Congreve insinuated his addresses in his Valentine to her Angelica, in Love for Love ; in his Osmyn to her Almeria, in the Mourning Bride ; and, lastly, in his Mirabel to her Millamant, in the Way of the World. Mirabel, the fine gentleman of the play, is, I believe, not very distant from the real character of Congreve.

¹ Mrs. Bracegirdle, says Cibber, had a lively aspect, with such a glow of health and cheerfulness in her countenance, that she inspired every body, that was not past it, with desire. Scarce an audience saw her that were not half of them her lovers, without a suspected favourite amongst them ; and this power over the public he attributes to her being guarded in her private character. But the assiduous courtship, which Congreve paid this actress, did not pass unnoticed. He was constantly in her lodgings, and often rode out with her.—He dined with her every day, says Tom Brown ; and visited her in public

and private*. Though this author indulges the spirit of scandal to excess, yet the tendresse of Congreve for Bracegirdle was a common subject of conversation. In a book, called the Comparison between the two Stages, published in 1702, her character is treated with illiberal freedom.——The author, to some tolerable observations on plays and players, has joined a most outrageous spirit of invective. It will be a sufficient vindication of Mrs. Bracegirdle, that she visited persons of the most unblemished character as well as most exalted rank in the female world. The charms of her conversation were not inferior, we may reasonably suppose, to those of her person; for she was visited, as Clive is now, by persons of rank and taste, to a very advanced old age. That Congreve was often at her house, to the last year of his life, must be attributed to a friendship contracted for an actress who had given life and spirit to some of his favourite characters; and likewise to that, and that only, we must place his bequeathing her the sum of 200l. When Curl, whom Dr. Arbuthnot termed one of the new terrors of death, from his constantly printing every eminent person's life and last will, published an advertisement of Memoirs of the Life of Congreve, she interested herself so far in his reputation as to demand a sight of the book in MS. This was refused. She then asked by what authority his life was written, and what pieces contained in it were genuine? Upon being told, there would be several of his essays, letters, &c. she answered, ‘Not one single sheet of paper, I dare say.’ And in this she was a true prophet; for, in that

* Tom Brown, Vol. III.

that book, there is not a line of Congreve which had not been printed before. Arbuthnot endeavoured, from friendship to the deceased, to prevent any imposition on the public in the name of Congreve, and met with impertinent abuse from the person who called himself the author of *Memoirs of the Life, Writings, and Amours, of William Congreve, Esq.*

The cause of Mrs. Bracegirdle's leaving the stage, in the prime of life, Cibber knew; but, for obvious reasons, he did not, in his *Apology*, relate it. When his book was published, she was then living, and would not have been pleased to have it told, that the preference given to Mrs. Oldfield, obliged her to retire from the theatre.—I have formerly seen a pamphlet, in which the history of this dispute, between these theatrical ladies, was minutely related. Oldfield rising greatly in the opinion of the public, as an actress of merit, both in tragedy and comedy, her friends claimed a right to appoint a day for her benefit before Mrs. Bracegirdle's. The friends of the latter maintained that she had a prior right, not only from long prescription, but superior merit. It was at last settled, by the contending parties, that the rival queens should fix on a favourite character, to be acted by them alternately: the part chosen was Mrs. Brittle, in the *Wanton Wife*. The preference of the public appeared so strongly in favour of Oldfield, that Bracegirdle never afterwards entered the playhouse as an actress. The time of her secession is not justly marked by Cibber, who fixes it to the year 1710. Mrs. Bracegirdle and Mrs. Barry had retired some years, when they both returned to the stage, to act for the benefit of their old friend, Mr. Betterton,

terton, in Congreve's Love for Love, April 7, 1709. The Royal Convert, of Rowe, was acted soon after the Union, (1707,) as we may learn from Ethelinda's prophecy in the conclusion of the play. The part of Ethelinda was acted by Oldfield; from which circumstance alone we may conclude, that Mrs. Bracegirdle was not then on the stage, as Rowe, otherwise, would certainly have given it to her. Some few years before her death, Mrs. Bracegirdle retired to the house of W. Chute, Esq; and died in 1748, in the eighty-fifth year of her age. She bequeathed her effects to her niece, who lived with her, and for whom she expressed a great regard.

The Mourning Bride of Congreve was originally acted in 1697. To see a tragedy, written by the best comic author of the age, drew together vast shoals of writers and critics by profession. It is traditionally said, that Dryden was present the first night of representation; that he was struck and surprised with the first act; but that, before the end of the second, he declared he was satisfied. It was, according to Downs, acted thirteen nights successively. It is still a very favourite play, especially with the ladies. The fable is not ill chosen, nor can I think the principal characters are weakly drawn. In the part of the King, the author has indeed mixed pompous phraseology with an outrageous vehemence of temper; yet still he is a character. Almeria is a fine picture of conjugal affection and persisting fidelity. Zara's noble and exalted mind, hurried away by ungovernable passions, renders her an excellent personage to excite pity and terror.—Osmyn is brave and generous, undismayed by adversity, and resigned to Providence.

The

'The plot is intricate, and must be observed with the most scrupulous attention, or it will escape the spectator. That the contrivers of destruction ought to fall by their own arts, is the apparent moral of the Mourning Bride.

Dr. Johnson commends the following part of a scene, in the second act of this tragedy, as the most poetical paragraph in the whole mass of English poetry :

A L M E R I A.

It was a fancy'd noise, for all is hush'd.

L E O N O R A.

It bore the accents of a human voice.

A L M E R I A.

It was thy fear,—or else some transient wind,
Whistling through hollows of the vaulted isle.
We'll listen.————

L E O N O R A.

——— Hark ! ———

A L M E R I A.

No, all is hush'd and still as death.—'Tis dreadful !
How rev'rend is the face of this tall pile,
Whose ancient pillars rear their marble heads
To bear aloft its arch'd and pond'rous roof,
By its own weight made steadfast and immovable,
Looking tranquility !—It strikes an awe
And terror to my aching sight !—The tombs
And monumental caves of death look cold,
And shoot a chillness to my trembling heart !
Give me thy hand—and let me hear thy voice !
Nay, quickly speak to me, and let me hear
Thy voice :—my own affrights me with its echoes !

The passage certainly deserves much praise ; but I would beg leave to remark, that Almeria's taking notice of the architecture of the building,—

By its own weight made steadfast and immovable,
Looking tranquillity,—

is a calm sentiment, and not of a piece with the rest. The fears of Almeria are raised by objects in her sight, which assist the fancy : but the successive images of terror, which Shakspeare gives his Juliet when she is about to drink the sleeping-potion given her by the frier, proceeding from a tender mind alarmed and apprehensive, are, in my opinion, equal, if not superior, to this boasted passage of Congreve :

JULIET,

[WHEN ALONE, AND AFTER RECEIVING FROM THE FRIER
THE SLEEPING DRAUGHT.]

— Come, phial ! —

What if it be a poison, which the frier
Subtly hath minister'd to have me dead,
Lest in this marriage he should be dishonour'd,
Because he marry'd me before to Romeo ?—
I fear it is !—And yet methinks it should not,
For he hath still been try'd a holy man.
How, if, when I am laid upon the tomb,
I wake before the time that Romeo
Comes to redeem me ?—there's a fearful point !
Shall I not then be stifled in the vault,
To whose foul mouth no healthsome air breathes in,
And there be strangled ere my Romeo comes ?
Or, if I live, is it not very like,
The horrible conceit of death and night,
Together with the terror of the place,
Where, for these many hundred years, the bones
Of all my bury'd ancestors are pack'd, —
Where bloody Tybalt, yet but green in earth,

Lies fest'ring in his shroud ; where, as they say,
At some hours in the night, spirits resort ;—

Or, if I wake shall I not be distraught
(Invironed with all these hideous fears.)
And madly play with my forefather's joints ;
And pluck the mangled Tybalt from his shroud ;
And, in this rage, with some great kinsman's bones,
As with a club, dash out my desp'rate brains ! —
O look ! methinks I see my cousin's ghost
Seeking out Romeo — — — Stay, Tybalt, stay ! —
Romeo, I come ! — — —

The interview between Ofmyn and Almeria, in the tombs, has generally an awkward effect, from their both falling at the same time ; and while poor Leonora is endeavouring to support them, a new personage, Heli, arrives ; and, his surprise not being generally well represented, a contemptuous laugh succeeds. I remember that Taswell, a comic actor of a particular cast, fancied he could speak tragedy as well as any man, and begged Mr. Fleetwood, the manager, to trust him with the part of Heli ; but the player and the patentee both repented the frolic, for Taswell was born only to excite mirth ; and surely a merrier audience, at his lisping out the lines of Heli, was never seen.

As this meeting of the husband and wife is lengthened out to tediousness, great part of it is curtailed by the prompter. Our author, who certainly felt the passion of love with energy, though he was not always very happy in expressing it, has thrown into this dialogue some very tender and affecting thoughts. Few of our play-writers were acquainted with the Greek dramatists : Congreve was a polite scholar ; he was well read in them.— Several passages, in the admirable scene between Orestes and Electra, in the tragedy of that name, where he

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discovers himself to his sister, may be traced in the interview of Osmyn and Almeria. I mean that part of Electra, where the Greek player, Porus, in acting that character, bore in his arms an urn which contained the ashes of his own son, and melted, by the excess of pathetic grief, all Athens into tears.

The prison-scene, in the third act, is made of consequence by the incident of Osmyn's finding a paper, written by his pious father, with a prayer for his son ; and the reflections, on the word 'heaven' being torn from the petition, resulting from situation, are very natural. Osmyn's being roused to a sense of his people's wrongs by his friend, Heli, is the effect of generous passion and nobly affecting. Garrick, through the whole part of Osmyn, was a skilful actor, but his inexhaustible fire had here room to operate to advantage.

In the prison dialogue, between Osmyn and Almeria, many expressions of the husband to the wife are extremely gross, and very disgraceful to the writer. The talking obscenely, in tragedy, is peculiar to the English dramatists ; I do not remember to have read, in any of the French tragedies, a single line that intrenches upon good-manners. Dryden, Otway, and Lee, were continually offending against decency; and Congreve, whose fancy was warm and wanton, has imitated his licentious predecessors, nay, in one or two passages of this last scene, almost surpassed them :

Then Garcia shall lie panting on thy bosom, &c.

Zara's surprising Almeria and Osmyn in conference produces an incident, which, from situation and circumstance is rather of the comic than the tragic

tragic strain. One princess jealous of another's superior charms may indeed be made a serious subject, as in the Distressed Mother; but the expressions of anger and resentment, in the captive queen, seldom fail to excite laughter. Mrs. Porter, who was deservedly admired in Zara, and Mrs. Pritchard, her successor in that part, could not, with all their skill, prevent the risibility of the audience in this interview. Mrs. Siddons alone preserves the dignity and truth of character, unmixed with any incitement to mirth from countenance, expression, or action.

If the composition of this tragedy, with respect to sentiment, passion, and diction, were equal to the well-studied œconomy of the fable, it might challenge a rank with our most frequented tragedies. But, notwithstanding we have, in some places, a false blaze of words and an exuberant swell of passion, blended with images far-fetched and unpleasing, there are scenes in the Mourning Bride, which never fail to attract the attention and engage the heart of the spectator; the happy conclusion will for ever cause joy and exultation in the audience, who will continually dismiss the players with the loudest approbation.

The first characters of this play are generally disliked by the principal actors; their taste is too refined, it seems, to relish the language of it; and we seldom see Osmyn, Almeria, Zara, and the King, supported according to the strength of a company. But there is no discretion in being wiser than our customers, who are, at the same time, our judges. Booth, Oldfield, Porter, and Mills the elder, were long the favourites of the public in Congreve's pantomime, as Churchill terms it. Mr. Garrick did not, on account of tur-

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gid expression, reject the noble passion of Osmyn. At the same time, Miss Bellamy was a pleasing Almeria ; Mrs. Pritchard and Berry supported Zara and the King.

When Oldfield, a few years before her death, resigned the Mourning Bride, Mrs. Thurmond, by the instructions of Booth in that part, became a favourite actress in tragedy. She was a rising performer at Lincoln's-inn fields, when, about the year 1724, Booth, Wilks, and Cibber, pleased with her manner of acting, engaged her at an advanced income. In 1733, she retired, in discontent, to Goodman's Fields, where honest Giffard gave her a kind reception.—Her first part at his theatre, was the Mourning Bride, which she acted with applause several nights. In a year or two she returned to Drury-lane ; and retired altogether from the theatre about forty years since.

For her own benefit, the comic Clive put on the royal robes of Zara ; she found them too heavy, and very wisely never wore them afterwards.

The Way of the World was Mr. Congreve's next play. The moral intention of the author, in Love for Love, was the reward of constancy in the lover, and the punishment of cruelty in the parent : in his last comedy, he proposes to guard mankind against matrimonial falsehood.—The plot is singularly intricate.

Mirabel, the fine gentleman of the play, is a successful lover of the Widow Languish, daughter of Lady Wishfor't, to whom he pays mock-addresses to cover his honourable courtship of Millamant her niece, a lady of large fortune. To prevent the discovery of the expected consequences of his intrigue with the Widow Languish, he prevails on her to marry his acquaintance, Mr.

Fainall :

Fainall ; but, to guard the lady against the apprehended tyranny of her husband, Mirabel persuades her to make over to him her whole estate real in trust.—Mrs. Marwood, the friend and mistress of Fainall, secretly in love with Mirabel, discovers to the old lady his pretended courtship, which begets her irreconcileable hatred. To prevent Lady Wishfor't's entering into an improper match from resentment, Mirabel marries his servant, Waitwell, to Foible, her waiting-woman ; and, by her assistance, hopes to impose him on the old lady for his uncle. By Marwood's overhearing the discourse, which passed between Wishfor't and Foible, and the latter's with Mrs. Fainall, the scheme of the sham marriage is discovered ; the lady is in a rage with her attendant ; and Waitwell, her husband, is arrested, and released on bail. Fainall, on his discovery that he was made a cuckold by anticipation, is enraged, and tries to oblige lady Wishfor't to make over her estate to him, with several other hard conditions, from which she is unexpectedly delivered by the agency of Mirabel, who, by proving the infidelity of Fainall and Marwood, and producing the deed of gift in trust, is rewarded with Millimant, which puts an end to the play.

Though this comedy does not present us with so glowing and so pleasing a picture of life and manners as *Love for Love*, yet the reader will be surprised at the great power and skill of the writer. To delineate the manners of a mere coxcomb is not so difficult ; but to give the picture of a man who incurs ridicule from affectation of wit, one who says so many things like wit that the common observer mistakes them for it, is not a cheap business : Witwou'd cost the writer more pains than ten *Tattles*. Whether Petulant be a character of humour

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I am at some loss to determine. B. Jonson defines humour to be a quality of the mind which draws the passions and affections all one way Congreve says, I believe truly, that humour is as hard to be defined as wit; and therefore declares he dares venture no farther than to tell us what it is not. Amongst his negatives he places habit and affectation. But how are they to be discriminated from true humour? — There is, in my opinion, in that which is called humour, something of both these qualities. Morose, in Ben Jonson's Silent Woman, is quoted, by all critics on the subject, as a true character of humour: but how did he acquire that hatred to all speech and noise but his own, if not from an affectation of singularity? nor can I see how he could possibly arrive at that degree of moroseness but by long custom and habit. Dryden defines humour to be a ridiculous extravagance in conversation wherein one man differs from another.—After having quoted Morose as a perfect character of humour, and more than insinuated that humour in itself is something uncommon, he soon after tells us, that there are no less than nine or ten parts of humour in the same comedy of the Silent Woman. If we subscribe to Locke's opinion, that we have no innate principles, we must likewise allow, that we have no innate humours. Much more depends on the construction of the body than we are, at all times, aware of. The organs of men, by which they receive outward impressions, are differently formed: from this alone the great variety of perceptions proceeds; and these, by degrees, produce distinction of humour and character. To make the reader amends for my presumption, in giving my opinion on this difficult subject, I will subjoin Mr. Congreve's

greve's opinion of humour, in his letter to Dennis, which he modestly says serves him for one: 'A singular and unavoidable manner of doing or saying any thing peculiar and natural to one man only, by which his speech and actions are distinguished from those of other men.' And this is certainly agreeable to Ben Jonson' definition of humour, though not expressed in the same words ; and not very different from Dryden's.—Corbin Morris, in his Essay on Wit and Humour, though he assumes a superiority over Congreve, does not, in my opinion, vary from him or B. Jonson: 'A humourist is a person, in real life, obstinately attached to sensible peculiar oddities, of his own genuine growth, which appear in his temper and conduct.' Morris's man of humour is really the man of wit and pleasantry who can play with the foibles of another ; and Foote says, in his Essay on the English Comedy, that the humourist is the food of the man of humour.

Sir Wilful Witwou'd is discriminated from any other fox-hunter by no peculiarity except his wilfulness : whether this will entitle him to a character of humour I leave to the critics.

Millamant is a most agreeable coquet, with a great share of sense and good-nature. She is, indeed, the most unexceptionable character in the play. The rest of the women are what I call Congreve's ladies. Strange ! that a man, who conversed so much in the polite world, could scarcely find a female, mongst his acquaintance, of genuine worth and unblemished honour, fit to engrraft in his comedies ! In Lady Wishfor't's style, Mrs. Marwood and Mrs. Fainall, had been *sophisticated* ; a misfortune which the old lady would willingly incur in an honourable way. Foible is a go-between, or bawd, and

and Mincing is ready to swear to any thing, for her ladyship's service.

Congreve was so well assured of the success of the Way of the World, that, in his prologue, he seems to defy the critics ; for he calls upon them to damn his play, if they do not approve it. With an affected modesty, he is entirely resigned to their pleasure :

He owns with toil he wrought the following scenes ;
But, if they're naught, ne'er spare him for his pains.
Damn him the more ; have no commiseration
For dulness or mature deliberation.
He swears he'll not resent one his'd-off scene ;
Nor like those peevish wits his play maintain,
Who, to assert their sense, your taste arraign,

In short,—one play shall, with your leave to shew it,
Give you one instance of a passive poet,
Who to your judgment yields all resignation,
To save or damn after your own discretion.

Yet, after all this self-denial, we are told, in positive terms, by Dennis, that this play ‘was hissed by barbarous fools in the acting ; and this treatment justly raised so much indignation in the writer, that he quitted the stage in disdain.’ How is it possible to reconcile this account with Congreve’s own words, in his dedication of the play to the Earl of Montague ?—‘ That it succeeded on the stage was almost beyond my expectation. Several years after this he accepted a share in one of the theatres : upon what account, except his writing of plays, the share could be offered him, am not competent to guess. That this play was very soon after its first exhibition, in favour with the public, is certain. I long since heard, indeed, that a particular scene, in the fifth act, be

tween Lady Wishfor't and Foible, was at first maltreated by the audience ; and perhaps for that very reason which the author would most value himself upon, a close imitation of his great idol, Ben Jonson. Let any body compare this dialogue, between the lady and her waiting-woman, with the first scene of the Alchemist, between the two sharpers, Face and Subtle, and he will find the reproaches of the former to the latter, on the miserable state in which he found him in St. Paul's, are strongly imitated ; they are the closest resemblances that can be found in any dramatic writings. This, borrowing from old Ben, the critics, it seems, of those days, did not approve ; they thought Congreve rich enough in his own treasures, without being obliged to have recourse to others.

It must not be to the condemnation of the whole, or any part, of the Way of the World, that we must attribute this writer's quitting the drama. A man, who, about ninety years since, when money was at least twice the value it is now, enjoyed places to the amount of 800l. per annum, could have little temptation to continue his authorship. Besides, the warm fun of the Marlborough family, by the elder branch of which he was particularly distinguished, in all probability relaxed his poetical nerves. His patrons in vain complained of his indolence, after they had given him the means to be idle.

The great skill of the poet, in conducting his plot, is no where more conspicuous than in the second act of the play. Two artful people, who, from satiety, are heartily tired of each other, and only from convenience and mutual interest keep up a correspondence, accidentally quarrel ; and, from a collision

a collision of their passions, they not only unfold their own actions and characters, but open the preceding transactions necessary to be known by the audience. The scene between Marwood and Fainall I have always considered as a masterpiece of writing, which cannot be read or admired too much. It is indeed a happy imitation of Ben Jonson's manner of drawing the incidents of the fable, and explanation of characters by sudden altercation.

Act III.

MRS. MARWOOD, ALONE,

[After hearing the conversation of Lady Wishfor't and Foible, and Mrs. Fainall and Foible.]

O man, man ! woman, woman !—the devil is an ass ! If I were a painter, I would draw him like an idiot, a driveler, with a bib and bells.

This is a good commentary upon a passage, in Shakespeare's Timon, which puzzled his greatest commentators :

SERVANT TO TIMON, ALONE,

[After being denied money by Sempronius.]

The devil knew not what he did when he made man politic,
He crossed himself by it ; and *I cannot but think, in the end, the villainies of man will set him free.*

In the fourth act of the Way of the World, the matrimonial articles, settled between Mirabel and Millamant, are so judiciously framed, that they will serve, with a little fashionable alteration, for a lasting model to all happy marriage contractors.

A C T

Act IV. Scene V.

MIRABEL

No decoy-duck to wheedle you a fop-scrambling to the play
in a mask.

When the mode, of females going masked to a play, originated, is not, I believe, very easy to determine. We may be almost certain that it was not a practice before the civil wars, nor in fashion till some time after the Restoration. I find these masked ladies mentioned often in the prologues and epilogues to Dryden's, Lee's, and Otway's plays. The custom was doubtless imported from France; and I believe we may, with some probability, fix its introduction to the year 1666 or 1667. The many disturbances, which these disguised females continually caused in the pit and boxes, prevented women of character from going to the playhouse; and, such was the continual scandal arising from it, that the sober and grave part of the town were often, by these tumults, deprived of theatrical entertainments.— Constant uproars and riots called loudly for public redress: at length, after this nuisance had been endured for near forty years, an accidental dispute, concerning one Mrs. Fawkes, which ended in a duel, produced an act of parliament, in the 5th of Queen Anne, which prohibited the wearing of masks in the theatre.

Act V.

Lady Wishfor't ; Mrs. Marwood.

M R S . M A R W O O D .

— And from thence he transferred to the hands, nay, to the throats and lungs, of hawkers with voices more licentious than the loud flounder-man's.

From King William's days to almost the end of George I. there was a fellow, who distinguished himself, above all others, in crying flounders in the streets of London.—His voice was loud, but not unmusical : the tones, in lengthening out the word flounders, were so happily varied, that people heard him with surprise and some degree of pleasure. Walker, about the year 1725, revived, in the summer season, a play called Massianello, or a Fisherman a Prince, taken, I believe, from Dursey's History of Massianello : he entered the stage crying flounders, in imitation of the loud flounder-man, so very like the original, that the applause, on this trifling occasion, were very loud and redoubled.

Of those comedians, who, within these fifty or sixty years, have distinguished themselves in Congreve's comedies, most of whom I have often seen act, something should be said. The Old Bachelor of Drury-lane was Harper, a good low comedian, but whose understanding was not of that size to give force to the sarcastic poignancy of expression, the whimsical struggles of amorous passion, or the violent rage on discovered folly, in Heartwell ; all which Quin perfectly conceived, and justly represented many years at Lincoln's-

inn fields and Covent-garden.—The Belmour of Wilks was the finished and polite libertine ; that of Walker was the bold and manly rake. The Captain Bluffe of B. Jonson was as complete a piece of acting as I ever saw : his person was against him ; for he was old and thin when I first saw him, which is now above fifty two years since, and I remember I thought him ill chosen for a bully ; but his exquisite performance soon cured me, and the whole audience, of any diffidence of his abilities. Colley Cibber's Fondlewife was much, and justly, admired and applauded, though some greatly preferred Dogget's portrait of old doting impotence to his. From a recollection of Cibber's manner, Foote acted a scene or two of Fondlewife better than any characters, except such as he wrote purposely for himself. Hippisley played Fondlewife in a manner original, and not much inferior to Cibber. Mrs. Horton, who was famous for coquets, was the Belinda of Drury-lane ; and Mrs. Younger, the sister of Mrs. Bicknel, celebrated, in the Tatler and Spectator for variety of humorous parts, was an actress much followed in this and many other comic characters, especially the Country Wife. But Mrs. Younger was a general actress, and sometimes appeared in tragedy, though, I think, not to advantage. Much about the time when she left the stage, she was married to the honourable Mr. Finch, who had, above twenty years before, been stabbed, in a quarrel, by the famous Sally Salisbury.

In Love for Love, I saw Wilks, in his old age, play the part of Valentine with all the spirit and fire of youth. Two years after Colley Cibber, who had been long the finished Tattle of

Drury-lane, acted Ben when he was past sixty : it was said that he copied Dogget, the original ; but neither his voice nor look were suitable to the rough animation of a sailor.—His acting Ben was a piece of managers craft. Joe Miller, who was a lively comic actor, and a favourite of the town in Ben, and many other diverting characters, had, by some mean œconomy of the managers, been driven from Drury-lane to Goodman's Fields : when they were obliged to recal him to his old station, they imagined that Ben, acted first by Cibber, would bring several full houses ; and that the public's being afterwards excited to see their friend, Joe Miller, in the same character, would double their profits. I believe they were disappointed in their expectations ; for Cibber, though he acted Ben but two or three times, took off the edge of appetite to see Miller. Shepherd was a most spirited actor of the sarcastic Sir Sampson Legend. My old acquaintance, Jack Dunstall, for many years played this part, as well as several others in comedy, with truth and nature. Jack had, indeed, the fault of corresponding by looks, sometimes, with his acquaintance in the pit. His Hodge, John Moody, Lockit, Sir Jealous Traffic; Jobson, and many other characters of the same cast, will be remembered with pleasure by his old friends, whom he often delighted with many a jovial song, and especially that famous one on the sea-victory obtained by Admiral Russel over the French at La Hogue ; this he sang harmoniously, and with a true English spirit. Dunstall was a member of several very respectable societies, and was valued, by all who knew him, for his honesty and good-nature.

Theophilus

Theophilus Cibber's first wife acted Miss Prue in an agreeable and lively manner. Clive gave such a romping spirit and humorous vivacity to the wild girl, that even Abington's childish simplicity and playful awkwardness cannot make us forget her.

The theatre of Covent-garden, in December, 1732, opened with the Way of the World. The scenes were new, and excellently well painted; all the decorations were suited to the grandeur and magnificence of the building. The boxes were, on this occasion, raised to half a guinea, the pit to five shillings, the galleries in proportion. The parts were thus distributed, as I remember:— Mirabel by Mr. Ryan; Quin, Fainall; Witwou'd, Chapman; Petulant, Neal; Sir Wilful Witwou'd, Hippisley; Waitwell, Pinkethman, son of the famous Pinkey; Lady Wishfor't, Mrs. Eggleton; Millamant, Mrs. Younger; Marwood, Mrs. Hallam; Mrs. Fainall, Mrs. Buchanan; Foible, Mrs. Stephens, afterwards Mrs. Rich.— Quin was a judicious speaker of Fainall's sentiments, but heavy in action and deportment; Walker, who succeeded him, understood and expressed the assumed spirit and real insolence of this artful character much better. Ryan was greatly inferior to the accomplished Mirabel of Wilks; and Chapman's Witwou'd, though not so finished as that of Colley Cibber, was of his own drawing, and very comic. His quickness of speech resembled the articulate volubility of Mr. King, who is likewise a very pleasing representor of Witwou'd; and, as I shall not, perhaps, have an opportunity in any other place of this book, to speak of this worthy man and excellent actor, I shall here pay him the just tribute due to his character.

racter. As an honest servant to the proprietors, engaged in a variety of parts, no man ever exerted his abilities to greater satisfaction of the public, or consulted the interest of his employers with more cordiality and assiduity. As a manager, intrusted to superintend, bring forward, and revive, dramatic pieces, his judgment was solid and his attention unwearyed. When he thought proper to quit his post of theatrical director, those of his own profession regretted the loss of a friend and companion, whose humanity and candour they had experienced, and on whose impartiality and justice they knew they could firmly depend.— Booth's character of the great actor, Smith, may be applied, with justice, to Mr. King: ‘By his impartial management of the stage, and the affability of his temper, he merited the respect and esteem of all within the theatre, the applause of those without, and the good will and love of all mankind.’

Hippisley, who acted Sir Wilful Witwou'd, was not an auricular imitator of another's manner; he was solely directed by the force of his own genius. Though he did not, in Sir Wilful, present to the spectator such a laughable figure of a superannuated lubber as Harper, his rival at Drury-lane, yet he pleased by dint of comic spirit and natural humour. Neal's Petulant was diverting, whimsical, and odd, though I believe not so critically just as Mr. Baddeley's.

Mrs. Younger's Millamant was spritely; but Oldfield's fine figure, attractive manner, harmonious voice, and elegance in dress, in which she excelled all her predecessors and successors except Mrs. Abington, left her without a rival. Mrs. Eggleton was a comic actress much admired by

the best judges : John D. of Argyle, who was a frequenter of the theatre and a constant friend to the actors, took a particular pleasure in seeing Mrs. Eggleton on the stage. With a great share of merit, she was extremely diffident, and never attempted a new character but with the utmost apprehension of her failing to please the audience. Mrs. Eggleton, like another Ariadne, died enamoured of Bacchus, about the year 1734.

Though, after the Way of the World, Congreve wrote no plays, he brought on the stage a masque called the Judgment of Paris, and Semele, an opera. The music to the first was composed by Purcel, Eccles, Singer, and Weldon. It was revived at Drury-lane about fifty years since, with fine scenes and decorations. ‘This piece,’ the author of Biographia Dramatica says, ‘is often performed to music by way of an oratorio.’ The same author, speaking of Semele, says, ‘that this short piece was performed, and printed in quarto, in 1707.’

The success of this opera is not mentioned by this or any other writer. The story is told by Ovid, in his Metamorphosis, l. 3. but the author has made an alteration in the fable, more conformable to the characters of the opera.—Congreve has shewn himself a scholar and a poet in this dramatic piece ; and I should imagine, if revived, with proper music and good singers, it would please in representation. The fable of this opera, which is not, as the Biographia Dramatica says, a short poem, is well conducted. The measure of the airs is various, and suited to the situations of the personæ dramatis. The author accounts for having no regard to rime, or equality of measure, in that part of the dialogue designed for

for recitative, which, he says, is only a more tunable speaking and a kind of prose in music.—Mr. John Beard and Mr. Joseph Vernon excelled greatly in recitative, by giving uncommon force of expression to the passions of love, grief, and resentment.

Of almost all Congreve's poems, except his Ode on Mrs. Hunt, Dr. Johnson speaks with a marked contempt. The Birth of the Muse he calls a wretched fiction. But Addison, in the dedication of his *Pax Gulielmi auspiciis Europæ reddita*, to Montague, bestows as much immoderate praise on the muse of Congreve as abuse on all the writers of his time who employed their pens on the subject of peace: *Quod si Congrevius ille tuus, divino quo solet furore correptus, materiam hanc non exornasset, vix tanti esset ipsa pax, ut illa lætaremur, tot perditissimis poetis tam misere decantata.*—This encomium is unworthy of Addison, and indeed is nothing less than absolute fustian; such it will appear, to every reader, in English as well as Latin: ‘Had not your Congreve, seized with his usual fit of divine madness, condescended to celebrate the subject, *the peace itself would not have been of such importance to us, nor could we, indeed, have rejoiced in it*, considering how vilely it has been debased by the pens of despicable scribblers.’

Amongst the poems of Prior, on King William's military achievements, Addison might, with ease, have selected a better subject for his panegyric than Congreve's Birth of the Muse; but Prior was, I believe, in no part of his life, a favourite of Addison.—Before Congreve wrote his last comedy, he published a formal defence of the four plays he had then written; in which there is some wit, a good deal of learning, many unwilling concessions, and no small share of disingenuity. Congreve's pride

pride was hurt by Collier's attack on plays which all the world had admired and commended ; and no hypocrite shewed more rancour and resentment, when unmasked, than this author, so greatly celebrated for sweetness of temper and elegance of manners. It must be confessed, that Collier, in his view of the stage, had gone too far ; he had forgotten the old axiom of *Ab abuso ad usum non valet consequentia* ; he would listen to nothing less than the entire abolition of stage-amusements and even of music itself ; he resembled too much the root-and-branch men, in the days of Charles I. who, not satisfied with reforming abuses, determined to lay the axe to the root of monarchy, and destroy our constitution in church and state.

I shall quote a passage, from Congreve's Defence, which I think worthy of the reader's perusal.

' To what end has he made such a bug-bear of the theatre ? Why should he possess the minds of weak and melancholy people with such frightful ideas of a poor play, unless to sour the humours of the people of most leisure, that they might be more apt to misemploy their vacant hours ? It may be there is not any where a people who should less be debarred of innocent diversions than the people of England. I will not argue this point, but I will strengthen my observations with one parallel to it from Polybius. This excellent author, who always moralises in his history, and instructs as faithfully as he relates, attributes the ruin of Cynethia, by the Ætolians, in plain terms, to the degeneracy from their Arcadian ancestors, in their theatrical and musical performances : " The Cynethians (says he) had their situation the farthest north of all Arcadia ; they were subjected to an inclement and uncertain air, and, for the most part, cold and melancholic ; and, for

this reason, they, of all people should last have parted with the innocent and wholesome remedies which the diversions of music administered to that founness of temper and, sullenness of disposition, which of necessity they must partake from the disposition and influence of their climate : for, they no sooner fell to negle~~E~~t these wholesome institutions, than they fell into dissensions and civil discords, and grew at length into such depravity of manners, that their crimes, in number and measure, surpassed all nations of the Greeks besides."

Congreve quotes this from Sir Henry Sheers's Polybius, which is, I believe, rather an abridgment than a translation. The whole passage, respecting the Cynethians, is well worth consideration : and the reader will find it faithfully given by Mr. Hampton, vol. i. in his quarto edition, pages 358, 59, 60, 61.

Congreve, of all the poets in his time, enjoyed the peculiar happiness of being respected and distinguished by persons the most eminent in the two contending parties, the whigs and tories, in every change of government, from his first appearance as a writer to the time of his death. More than that, he was addressed, courted and honoured, by all the authors of his time, a tribe of men who are not very remarkable for their love of superior merit in their rivals — The differences of Parnassus were submitted to his decision ; and the decores of Congreve, the poetical chancellor, were subject to no reversal. Even Dennis, the sour and intractable Dennis, paid his homage to this writer, who honoured him with his correspondence, and wrote to him several letters, which Dennis, afterwards published, and among the rest, an excellent one upon humour. Congreve doubtless gave this Cerberus

a sop,

a sop, as the best means to soften his rugged temper. When asked why he listened to the praise of Dennis, he said, he had much rather be flattered than abused. Swift had a particular friendship for our author, and generously took him under his protection in his high authoritative manner; he claimed the patronage of Lord Oxford for a man preferred by whig-ministers, and who still retained whig-principles.—Dr. Johnson says, that Congreve discovered more literature than the poets have commonly attained. I have already mentioned his acquaintance with the Greek dramatic writers, a study which seems to have been neglected by most of our former play-authors. Mr. Colman, Mr. Murphy, and Mr. Cumberland, are conversant with the antient writers of Greece and Rome; and it is to be hoped, that the translation of Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, by Dr. Potter, Dr. Franklin, and Mr. Woodhull, and the remarks of Mr. Jodderell upon the *Bacchæ* and *Ion* of Euripides, in which he has displayed exquisite taste and most extensive learning, will excite the curiosity and industry of our present and future dramatists, more especially our tragedians, to become acquainted with the great originals of Athens.

To have done with Congreve: the charms of his conversation must have been very powerful, since nothing could console Henrietta Duchess of Marlborough, for the loss of his company, so much as an automaton, or small statue of ivory, made exactly to resemble him, which every day was brought to table. A glass was put in the hand of the statue, which was supposed to bow to her grace and to nod in approbation of what she spoke to it.

Betterton.

C H A P. XLVI.

Some mistakes relating to Betterton in the Biographia Britannica.—His age.—Old Downs's Roscius Anglicanus.—Betterton's marriage.—No stage-misses till after the revolution.—Superior merit of the king's actors.—Spectacle and music.—Wintersel, &c.—Dryden and Lee.—Hart's salary.—Causes of the declension of the king's comedians.—Agreement between Hart, &c. and Betterton, &c.—Hart's death.—Mohun and Nell Gwin.—Union of the companies.—Betterton's loss by a venture.—Mrs. Barry, Mrs. Bracegirdle, Mrs. Montfort, and Mrs. Bonan.—Betterton's salary—Christopher Rich.—Cibber and John Rich.—The family of John Rich offended.—King William, Betterton, and Mrs. Barry.—Powel.—Mrs. Montfort.—Betterton's last benefit and death—Character of Mrs. Betterton.—Her insanity.—Time of her death uncertain.—Cibber's portrait of Betterton—Commended for his humanity.—Friendship of Pope and Betterton.—The latter's picture by Pope.—Chaucer's characters.—Epitaph recommended by Pope.—Congreve fellow-manager with Betterton.—Booth.—Wilks.—Dramatic pieces of Betterton.—Mrs. Booth's piety.—Betterton and Garrick.

AS, in the course of these Miscellanies, I have neglected no opportunity to do justice to the merits of that accomplished actor and respectable man, Mr. Thomas Betterton, I shall have less occasion to enlarge here upon the subject. The compilers of the Biographia Britannica, a work which confers

fers honour upon themselves and the nation, have very assiduously laboured to clear up the obscurities in which the life of this eminent man is involved. In a matter of great difficulty, and where so little authentic information can be obtained, it is not surprising that a few mistakes should escape the most inquisitive intelligence. I shall endeavour to rectify some errors in that work, and to throw light on certain facts, which have, through length of time, been somewhat darkened.

I do not find, that, in the article of Betterton, the writers of this valuable work have made any use of Downs's *Roscius Anglicanus*; and, though it must be confessed that Downs is very confused and inaccurate, yet, as he is almost the only writer on the stage for a long period, some valuable matter may, with curious searching, be picked out of his pamphlet. His authority, relating to the age of Betterton, must give place to the more authentic testimony of Southern, adduced in the *Biographia*, who, it seems, had his intelligence from the mouth of the great actor himself. By this account, he was born in 1635, though Downs places his birth three years later; and this seems a little surprising, as the *Roscius Anglicanus* was published in the life time of Betterton, who must have conversed with the author almost continually from 1662 to 1706, the date of his *Narrative*.

The marriage of Betterton with Mrs. Saunderson is fixed, in the *Biographia Britannica* and *Biographia Dramatica*, to the year of 1670. But the exact time is very uncertain: it appears, from Downs, that the *Villain*, a tragedy, and *Shakspeare's Henry the Eighth*, were revived, at the duke's theatre, before the plague of London, in 1665; and the name of Mrs. Betterton is placed

to Belmont in the Villain, and to Q. Katharine in Henry the Eighth; consequently the marriage must have taken place five years sooner than the time settled by these writers. It must be observed, that, though Mrs. Saunderson was very young when married to Betterton, she retained the appellation of mistress; mademoiselle, or miss,* though introduced amongst people of fashion, in England about the latter end of Charles II.'s reign, was not familiar to the middle class of people till a much later time, nor in use amongst the players till toward the latter end of King William's reign. Miss Cross was the first of the stage-misses: she is particularly noticed in Joe Haines's epilogue to Farquhar's Love and a Bottle.

It is generally allowed, that the superior success of the king's theatre obliged the duke of York's company to have recourse to spectacle and music; and this, says Cibber, introduced that species of representation called dramatic operas. I have heard, from the best information of some very old persons, who lived in the reign of Charles II. that Betterton, as a general actor, was superior to any one comedian of his time. But Hart and Mohun, the great actors of the king's house, had Kynaston, Wintersel, and several other original players in tragedy, to second them; nor were the comic actors of the king's house much inferior to those of the duke's theatre.

Dryden and Lee, the two court poets, wrote for the king's theatre, while that was in a flourishing state. Hart's salary, in the Biogr. Brit. was 3l. per week. This must be understood to be independent

* Miss was formerly understood to mean a woman of pleasure; so Dryden, in his epilogue to the Pilgrim, written in 1700: Misses there were, but modestly conceal'd.

pendent of the profits arising from his share in the house, clothes, and scenes; for the principal performers of that theatre were sharers; and Downs says, that, at the end of a playing season, they sometimes divided amongst them 1000*l.* each.

The declension of the king's theatre must not solely be ascribed to the growing taste for operas, music, and dancing. About the year 1680, they had lost, by death or retirement from the stage, several actors of great merit; Burt, Wintersel, Cartwright, Lacy, and others; besides, the declining age of the great masters in their profession, Hart and Mohun, rendered them less capable of action than in the prime and vigour of life; the young actors too, such as Goodman and Clarke, were become impatient to get possession of the principal characters. More than all this, I suspect a rupture to have taken place between Hart and Mohun; for, in the agreement, signed, Oct. 14, 1681, between Dr. Davenant, Thomas Betterton, Gent. and W. Smith, Gent. on the one part, and Charles Hart and Edward Kynaston on the other, the intent of which was to effect an union of the two companies,—no notice whatever is taken of Mohun, who acted after Hart's death, in 1682, at the king's theatre, in the first play written by Southern, called the Persian Prince. Nell Gwin in the same play represented a principal character.

The time when the companies were united, the author of Betterton's article, in the Biogr. Brit. rightly says, was uncertain. He suspects that the union was not effected till 1686; but, by looking on the date of Dryden and Lee's Duke of Guise, the first edition, which was printed in 1683, by the title-page and the dramatis personæ, I find, that

that Betterton and company were then in possession of the king's theatre.

Betterton was esteemed a very able negotiator, and was certainly very instrumental in bringing about the union of the companies. His conduct, on this occasion, did not escape censure ; I suppose chiefly from Mohun and those who opposed the junction, and persisted to act in opposition to Betterton at the king's theatre, though they had lost Hart and Kynaston ; but all unprejudiced persons will clear him from any reprehension, for endeavouring to bring about what was become absolutely necessary. K. Charles himself, it is said, approved and recommended the treaty for an union.

The misfortune which Betterton sustained, by losing the greatest part of his fortune in a venture to the East-Indies, is very exactly related in the Biographia Britannica. His behaviour, on this memorable occasion, reflects honour on the magnanimity of his mind ; his taking into his house, and educating at his own expence, the daughter of his ruined friend who had engaged him in the unhappy adventure, places him in a rank with Satyrus, the Greek comedian, whose generosity to the captive daughters of his dead host I have related in my observations on the second act of Hamlet. The daughter of Betterton's unhappy friend was married to Mr. Bowman, whom I have often had occasion to mention ; she was admired as a very fine woman and a pleasing actress. The stage, perhaps, never produced four such handsome women, at once, as * Mrs. Barry, Mrs. Bracegirdle, Mrs. Mountfort, and Mrs. Bowman : when they appeared

* The illiberal historian of the two stages says,—Mrs. Barry was the finest woman *on the stage*, and the reverse when off.

peared together, in the last scene of the Old Bachelor, the audience was struck with so fine a groupe of beauty, and broke out into loud applaudses.

It is to be lamented that Betterton, when acting-manager, and constantly labouring to please the public in a variety of chara&ters, should have so little real influence and so small a portion of the profits ; this great actor's salary never rising to more than 4l. per week. Christopher Rich, father to the late John Rich, Esq; of Covent-Garden, possessed the greatest share of the patent ; and, if we may believe Colley Cibber, he employed all his arts to distress the actors, though not really to benefit himself. In short, Cibber makes him out a man who had neither conscience nor ability : he draws so hateful a character of obstinacy, low cunning, tyranny, and perverseness, that humanity would induce us to suppose the writer had drawn a caricatura rather than a real portrait. Yet Cibber and the son of this man, I well remember, always appeared to live on very friendly terms, even after the publication of the Apology. It was my ill fortune, it seems, to displease the family of John Rich, by attributing to him, in my Memoirs of Mr. Garrick, some whimsical peculiarities, which, at the same time, I said were owing to the neglect of his education. My ascribing to him several amiable qualities, besides commending his professional abilities at large, did not, it seems, appease their anger ; but they should consider, I was not writing the lives of the saints.

To return to Betterton. Rich and his partners carried their oppression of the players to such a height, that an application to the throne, for redress, became absolutely necessary. The nobility,

lity, and all persons of eminence, favoured the cause of the comedians ; the generous Dorset introduced Betterton, Mrs. Barry, Mrs. Bracegirdle, and others, to the king, who granted them an audience. William, though deficient in the charm of affability and condescension, with which Charles, his uncle, captivated all who approached him, was yet ready to extend his favour to the players. He was not displeased to see in his presence two such wonders in the theatrical world as Betterton and Mrs. Barry, whose keen expressive looks commanded attention and respect. William, who had freed all the subjects of England from slavery, except the inhabitants of the mimical world, rescued them also from the insolence and tyranny of their oppressors.

In a note, in the Biog. Brit. relating to Powell, who was vain enough to think himself a rival to Betterton, this player is treated with too much contempt. Cibber, though an enemy, does not rate him so low as this writer, but attributes his not rising to a greater degree of perfection in his profession, to too much confidence, to idleness, and to intemperance. Though Addison, in the Spectator, animadverts upon Powell's tragic extravagances in some situations of character, upon the whole he highly commends him ; nor would the difficult part of Orestes, in the Distressed Mother, have been put into his hands, by Wilks, Dogget, and Cibber, if Addison and the author had not chosen him for the part.

Another note, in the same Biographia, mentions Mrs. Mountfort and Mrs. Verbruggen as belonging to Rich's company of comedians. The writer did not know, or at least had forgotten, that Mrs. Mountfort was, by her second marriage, become

come Mrs. Verbruggen. This admirable comic actress died in childbed, 1703.

After Betterton had, for several years, acted as chief manager, under King William's patent, at the theatre in the Tennis-court, Lincoln's-inn fields, with various success, he found that age and diseases, accompanied with frequent fits of the gout, advanced so fast upon him, that he was obliged to resign the management of the theatre, and to act only particular parts as often as his health would permit. By his last two benefits he is thought to have gained near 1000l. and yet his circumstances, at his death, were reproachful to an age of which he was so great an ornament. He died April 28, 1710, and was buried in Westminster-abbey. Steele's reflections, in his Tatler of May the 2d, on Betterton's funeral, are written with the tender feelings of a friend, and in a style dignified with sentiment and pathos.

Mrs. Betterton was the faithful companion and fellow-labourer of this great comedian for more than five-and-forty-years. She excelled in comedy and tragedy; and was, according to Cibber, so superior in representing some of Shakspeare's characters, especially Lady Macbeth, that even Mrs. Barry could not approach her in some particular touches of the madness incidental to that part.—Her understanding was solid, and her address gentle and polite; while her husband instructed the noble male-performers in Crown's Calisto, acted at court in 1675, Mrs. Betterton gave lessons to the Princesses Mary and Anne, daughters of James Duke of York, and Mrs. Sarah Jennings, afterwards the famous Duchess of Marlborough. She likewise taught the Princess Anne the part of Semandra, in the tragedy of Mithridates, which was also

also acted at court. Betterton was naturally of a cheerful disposition, and had a very high confidence in Providence. The wife was of a thoughtful and melancholy temper; she was so strongly affected with his death, that she ran distracted, though she appeared rather a prudent and constant than a fond and passionate wife. They had no children: William Betterton, said to be his son by some mistaken writers, who was drowned in bathing, at Wallingford, in 1662, was a man very near as old as himself, as will appear on consulting Downs; nor is it known that he was at all related to our Betterton.

A lady, intimately acquainted with Mrs. Betterton, amongst other particulars which she communicated to the compilers of the *Biographia Britannica*, informed them, that, some time before her death, she recovered her senses. Pity it is, that the same lady did not inform them of the exact time when she died. The *Biographia Dramatica* asserts, positively, that she left the world six months after the death of her husband; in the *Biographia Britannica*, it is more cautiously said, that, *according to the best information*, she died within that time. But, that she was alive about thirteen months after, viz. June 4, 1711, I shall prove, from the following playhouse-advertisement, taken from the original edition of the *Spectator*:

At the particular desire of several ladies of
quality.

For the benefit of the widow of the late
famous tragedian, Mr. Betterton,

At the theatre-royal in Drury-lane, this present
Monday, the 4th of June,

Will be presented a comedy, called the
M A N O F M O D E, or Sir Foplin Flutter.

Betterton's character, as an actor, is drawn by Cibber in so masterly a style, that nothing equal to it, on the subject of acting, is to be found, I believe, in any language. Though to attempt any addition, to Cibber's complete enumeration of Betterton's talents, would be impertinent, and, at this distance of time, ridiculous,—to pick up a few particulars, relating to this extraordinary man, from books and oral tradition, may not be altogether unentertaining.

Betterton was not only celebrated for his polite behaviour to the dramatic writers of his time, but also his great modesty, in not presuming to understand any characters which they offered to him till he had their repeated instructions. Besides this, I find him commended, in some verses published in the State-poems, for his humanity, in opening his purse, to such writers whose wants stood in need of his assistance, and till the success of their piece on a third night enabled them to repay

pay their kind lender. I remember that he is, in one poem, called, the poet's banker. Unlike Colley Cibber, he treated authors with good nature and good manners, never assuming haughty and insolent behaviour. By his and Mrs. Barry's superior exertions, many an indifferent play passed on the public, in acting, for a work of merit, the wonderful skill of the actor supplying all deficiencies. The dramatic writers of those times appear to have been fully convinced of his inclination and abilities to forward their works on the stage.—Some of them have left testimonies of their deference to his judgment and regard for his friendship ; particularly Dryden, in the beginning of his preface to *Don Sebastian*, and Rowe in the latter part of Shakspeare's Life.

Nothing can give us a higher idea of the sweetness of his temper, and of his great affability, than the effect his behaviour produced on Pope, who, when first brought into his company, must have been very young, and, in all probability, a mere boy. So charmed was Pope with the good old man, and he with Pope, that, at his request, Betterton sat to him for his picture, which he drew in oil. This curiosity is still to be seen at Caenwood, in the possession of Lord Mansfield.—So eager was Pope to enlarge Betterton's fame, that he published, in his Miscellany, the prologues of Chaucer, modernized, in his name ; but the true modernizer, we have reason to believe, was Pope himself : Fenton, we are told by Dr. Johnson, offered him five pounds if he would produce those poems in Betterton's hand writing.

From Pope's literary correspondence with Mr. Cromwell, it appears, he had informed him that

he

he intended to take care of Betterton's remains, meaning, I suppose, this good-natured posthumous forgery. Pope, in a P. S. to one of his letters, writes thus: This letter of deaths puts me in mind of poor Betterton's ! over whom I would have this sentence of Tully for an epitaph, which will serve for his moral as well as his theatrical capacity :

* *Vitæ bene actæ jucundissima est recordatio.*

That Betterton was much respected and esteemed, by persons of the highest rank and greatest eminence, cannot be questioned. By his interest with Lord Dorset and other noblemen, a patent was granted for the building a new theatre. Congreve condescended to accept a share in this playhouse, and to be a joint manager with Betterton; but Congreve afterwards spurned the low degrees by which he rose to distinction, and, in his answer to Collier, pretty plainly condemns those who occasioned his playhouse connexion.

It is said, that this author wrote an occasional prologue, which was spoken by Mrs. Bracegirdle, as Mr. Rowe did an epilogue, spoken by Mrs. Barry, on the benefit-night of Betterton, April, 1709: but, although the epilogue remains a lasting testimony of the author's sincere regard for his old friend, the prologue was withdrawn, and never appeared in print †.

Smith, an actor whom Booth terms almost equal to Betterton, lived in the utmost harmony with

* Sweet is the remembrance of a life well acted.

† Life of Congreve, part 2, p. 11.

with him till the death of the former in 1695. They had long been associates in the management of the theatre, nor was it known that they ever fell into the least variance. Booth spoke of Betterton always with respect and veneration. While living he paid him filial duty, and the other proved a second father to him, by his kind admonitions and friendly instructions. It was his constant practice to encourage young players that manifested any degree of merit with becoming modesty.— Wilks played Lysippus, in the Maid's Tragedy, for his first part in London: when he spoke to Betterton, who acted Melantius, he was so struck with awe and surprise, that he could scarcely utter a line. Betterton, instead of discouraging him, revived his spirits, by telling him, that apprehensive fear of an audience, in a young actor, was no ill sign of intrinsic merit. When the mean parsimony of Christopher Rich, and his partners, obliged Wilks to think seriously of returning to Dublin, Betterton laboured to convince them, though in vain, of their imprudence in parting with a young man of such abilities.

Of Betterton as an author, who wrote some plays and altered others, more cannot with truth be said, than that, by his perfect knowledge of the stage, he conducted the plot and disposed the scenes in such a manner as to produce dramatic effect. Downs assures us, that most, if not all, of his pieces were much applauded and followed; but, notwithstanding they were well approved by the public, he seems to have thought very modestly of them, for he never would consent to publish one of them. His Amorous Widow, or Wanton Wife,

Wife, was long the favourite of the town. Part of this play, I mean the plot of the Wanton Wife, which is taken from Moliere's George Dandin, is now often acted as a farce, in which Mr. Quick and Mrs. Mattocks play the principal parts to great advantage.

The piety of Mrs. Booth raised a monument to the memory of her husband in Westminster-ab-bey ; but, though it is said that Wilks, Dogget, and Cibber, and Booth, Wilks, and Cibber, successively patentees of Drury-lane theatre, talked of paying due respect in marble to their old master in the same cathedral, they did not put their intention into practice. Mr. Garrick, who on all occasions, was ready to promote any public or generous design, could not have erected a more lasting monument to his own fame than by perpetuating the memory of a man who was so eminent an ornament of the English stage ; a man, who, for universality of genius, was the only actor who could be compared to himself. For, if Garrick played Lear and Abel Drugger, the other acted Othello and Sir Toby Belch ; the former's Hamlet and Scrub are not parts more distinct or distant from each other than Betterton's Hotspur and Falstaff ; the latter's Alexander the Great and Sir Solomon Single may be fairly contrasted with Garrick's Richard the Third and the School-boy. They were both accomplished masters of their profession ; and scarcely any part, in the whole personæ dramatis, could be too difficult for their consummate abilities.

In Garrick's museum, you might have seen multiplied paintings and engravings of himself, in various characters ; but no picture or

print, that I can call to mind, of any other actor *.

* Though I have proved, from the title and dramatis personæ of the Duke of Guise, that Betterton, Kynaston, &c. were in possession of Drury-lane theatre in 1683, I find, by the title and characters of Banks's Unhappy Favourite, that this play was acted at the same theatre, in 1685, by some of the old company; by Clarke, Griffin, Major Mohun, Mrs. Gwin, and others.

Neither the author's prologue, nor Dryden's prologue and epilogue, give any light into this obscure matter.

Colley Cibber.

C H A P. XLVII.

Reformation of the stage owing to a player.—Cibber's *Love's last Shift*.—Richard Norton, Esq.—Dennis.—*Careless Husband* and *Provoked Husband*.—Last act of *Love's last Shift*.—Cibber a reproach to other comic writers.—The people not so licentious as the dramatic poets.—Cibber's mean income.—Sir *Novelty Fashion* a good picture of fops.—His remarkable dress.—Actress of *Narcissa*.—*Hillaria* and *Amanda*.—*Amanda*.—Sir *William Wisewood*.—Ben Jonson, the actor.—Mr. Horden, an accomplished player, killed.—Rose-tavern.—George Powell.—Nantz-brandy. Cibber and Verbruggen.—Richard Cross's Account of Master Colley.—Mr. Alexander.—Cibber a servant in Sir Antony Love.—Verbruggen and the Duke of St. A.—An odd apology.—Chesterfield and Cibber.—The latter's character by a certain writer.—Verbruggen's *Oroonoko*.—Tom Erlington.—Barry and Garrick.—More relating to Verbruggen.—Vanbrugh's *Relapse*.—His comic muse.—Lord Foppington, Cibber's chief excellence.—Cibber's *Æsop*.—Mr. Henderson.—Prolific muse of Vanbrugh.—Swift and Pope.—Cibber's *Sir John Brute*.—Quin and Garrick.—Comparison between Cibber and Garrick.—A cap for the ladies, by Mr. Garrick.—Cibber's *Xerxes*. Betterton and Mrs. Barry.—*Careless Husband*;—character of the play.—Cibber and Mrs. Porter.—Mrs. Oldfield;—described at length.—Her great abilities.—Mr. Manwaring and General Churchill.—Prince and Princess of Wales.—Mr. Pope.—*Narcissa*.—Mrs. Saunders.—Tragedy and

Mrs. Oldfield. — *Sophonisba.* — *Mrs. Oldfield's confounding a hissing spectator.* — *Her Lady Townly.* — *Mrs. Heron and Mrs. Woffington.* — *Wilks in Lord Townly.* — *Mr. Garrick* — *Barry.* — *Gibber's two unlucky passions.* — *His acting tragedy.* — *Iago.* — *Mr. Macklin's Iago and Barry's Othello.* — *Cibber exploded in Scipio.* — *Cibber a manager.* — *Choking singing birds;* — *Cibber's method of it.* — *An anecdote.* — *Colonel Brett.* — *Cibber accused of pilfering from plays left in his hands.* — *His method of treating authors.* — *Wilks and Booth.* — *Dogget;* — *his character.* — *Dicky Norris and Bullock.* — *Mrs. Porter.* — *Cibber's love of gaming.* — *Sir Courtly Nice.* — *Wilks a reformer.* — *Powell* — *Original Spectator* — *Addison and Steele.* — *Powell and a bailiff.* — *Cibber mistaken.* — *Booth beloved.* — *Harper and Shepherd.* — *The Settle.* — *Power of Envy.* — *Garrick and Cibber.* — *Cibber's repartee to Garrick.* — *Erlington.* — *Cibber's character concluded.*

TO a player we are indebted for the reformation of the stage. The first comedy, acted since the Restoration, in which were preserved purity of manners and decency of language, with a due respect to the honour of the marriage-bed, was Colley Cibber's Love's last Shift, or the Fool in Fashion. The principal plot of this play was not unknown to the English theatre : Amanda's scheme to allure her profligate husband to her arms, by personating another woman, resembles the contrivance of Helen in All's well that ends well, and still more, I believe, the wife's scheme in Shirley's Gamester. The success of this piece exceeded greatly the author's expectation ; but so little was hoped from the genius of Cibber, that the critics reproached him with stealing his play.

To

To his censurers he makes a serious defence of himself, in his dedication to Richard Norton, Esq. of Southwick, a gentleman who was so fond of stage plays and players, that he has been accused of turning his chapel into a theatre.

The furious John Dennis, who hated Cibber, for obstructing, as he imagined, the progress of his tragedy called *The Invader of his Country*, in very passionate term denies his claim to this comedy : ‘ When the *Fool in Fashion* was first acted,’ says the critic, ‘ Cibber was hardly twenty years of age ; now could he, at the age of twenty, write a comedy with a just design, distinguished characters, and a proper dialogue, who now, at 40, treats us with Hibernian sense and Hibernian English ? ’

Poor Cibber ! it was his hard fate to have his best comedies attributed to any body but himself. His *Careless Husband* was, for a long time, given to the Duke of Argyle and other noblemen. Nothing could put an end to such ungenerous and weak suggestions but his scenes of high life in the *Provoked Husband*, which he proved to be his own by printing the unfinished MS. of Sir John Vanbrugh’s play, called *a Journey to London*. Some comic characters of this writer were severely treated by the audience, because supposed to be written by Cibber.

In *Love’s last Shift*, the audience were particularly charmed with the great scene, in the last act, where the ill-treated and abandoned wife reveals herself to her surprised and admiring husband. The joy of unexpected reconciliation, from Loveless’s remorse and penitence, spread such an uncommon rapture of pleasure in the audience, that never were spectators more happy in easing their minds by

by uncommon and repeated plaudits. The honest tears, shed by the audience at this interview, conveyed a strong reproach to our licentious poets, and to Cibber the highest mark of honour. The uncommon run of this comedy, which I have been told formerly, by several who lived at that time, was greatly admired and followed, is a convincing proof that the people at large are never so vicious as to abandon the cause of decency and virtue, and that it was entirely owing to our dramatic writers themselves, that plays were not lessons of morality as well as amusements of pleasure. While Congreve's plays were acted with applause at Lincoln's-inn fields theatre, Cibber's Love's last Shift, Vanbrugh's Relapse, and Southern's Oroonoko, were successfully opposed to them at Drury-lane. But, while Cibber, by his new comedy, and his peculiar merit in acting foppish and other parts, drew crowds after him, the parsimonious and ungrateful patentees allotted him no larger income than thirty or forty shillings per week.

Sir Novelty Fashion was a true picture of manners in the fop of the times. Before this author wrote, our affected gentlemen of the stage were, I believe, not quite so entertaining with their extravagances, nor so learned in their profession of foppery. Etheridge's Sir Fopling Flutter is rather a copy of Moliere's Marquis than a thing of English growth. Crown's Sir Courtly Nice is, in a few shadows, distinct from the other, by being more insignificantly soft and more pompously important. Sir Courtly's song, of 'stop thief!' is a translation from a sonnet of the French poet. The presenting the reader with Sir Novelty's dress will revive the idea of the long-forgotten beau of King William's time. In the genuine language of a fop,

who

who expects his mistress should admire him for his outside decoration rather than the accomplishments of his mind, Sir Novelty tells Narcissa, that his fine fashioned suit raises a great number of ribbon-weavers: ‘In short, madam, the cravat-string, the garter, the sword-knot, the cincturine, the bardash, the steinkirk, the large button, the plume, and full peruke, were all created, cried down, and revived by me.’ Such a dress of antient foppery, exhibited at a masquerade, woud draw as many admirers as any habit of modern invention.

In his *Narcissa*, acted by Mrs. Montfort, Cibber drew an outline of a coquet in high life; of which character he afterwards made a finished picture, in his *Lady Betty Modish*. Besides the reforming the moral of comedy, Cibber was the first who introduced men and women of high quality on the stage, and gave them language and manners suitable to their rank and birth.

Mrs. Cibber, the wife of Colley, whose name is seldom to be found in any of the personæ dramatis, was his *Hillaria*. So much depended on *Amanda*, and especially in the two last acts, that the success of the play must, in some measure, be owing to the actress, Mrs. Rogers, who continued a favourite of the public till her merit was eclipsed by the superior splendor of an Oldfield. Sir William Wisewou’d, the old gentleman, who pretends to great command over his passions, and is constantly subdued by them, is, I think, a new character; and, I believe, the first, of consequence, which gave old Ben Jonson an opportunity to discover his great comic powers: he had been just brought to London from an itinerant company. The audience saw his merit, and cherished it through life, from 1695 to 1742.

Mr. Horden, the son of a clergyman, a very promising young actor, and remarkable for his fine person, was the young Worthy. This gentleman was bred a scholar : he complimented George Powell, in a Latin encomium, on his Treacherous Brothers. He was soon after killed, in an accidental fray, at the bar of the Rose-tavern, which was at that time remarkable for entertaining all sorts of company, and subject, of consequence, to riot and disorder. In this house George Powell spent great part of his time ; and often toasted, to intoxication, his mistress, with bumpers of Nantz-brandy ; he came sometimes so warm, with that noble spirit, to the theatre, that he courted the ladies, so furiously on the stage, that, in the opinion of Sir John Vanbrugh, they were almost in danger of being conquered on the spot.—Powell was a principal player of Drury-lane when Love's last Shift was first acted: some quarrel or difference between him and Cibber, we may reasonably suppose, prevented his having a part in the play, considering there were two at least, well-suited to his abilities, Loveless and Young Worthy. Verbruggen he chose to represent the former. As the Miscellanies are drawing to a conclusion, I shall not have so fit an opportunity to do justice to the merits of an actor of whom Cibber speaks so sparingly and coldly.

Cibber and Verbruggen were two dissipated young fellows, who determined, in opposition to the advice of friends, to become great actors.—Much about the same time, they were constant attendants upon Downs, the prompter of Drury-lane, in expectation of employment. What the first part was, in which Verbruggen distinguished himself, cannot now be known. But Mr. Richard Cross, late prompter of Drury-lane theatre, gave

me the following history of Colley Cibber's first establishment as a hired actor. He was known only, for some years, by the name of Master Colley. After waiting impatiently a long time for the prompter's notice, by good fortune he obtained the honour of carrying a message on the stage, in some play, to Betterton. Whatever was the cause, Master Colley was so terrified, that the scene was disconcerted by him. Betterton asked, in some anger, who the young fellow was that had committed the blunder? Downs replied, 'Master Colley.'—'Master Colley! then forfeit him.'—'Why, sir,' said the prompter, 'he has no salary.'—'No!' said the old man; 'why then put him down ten shillings a week, and forfeit him five shillings.'

To this good-natured adjustment of reward and punishment, Cibber owed the first money he took in the treasurer's office.

Verbruggen was so passionately fond of Alexander the Great, at that time the hero of the actors, that the players and the public knew him, for some years, by no other name. I have seen the name of Mr. Alexander to several parts in Dryden's plays; to Ptolemy in Cleomenes King of Sparta, to Aurelius in K. Arthur, and Ramirez in Love triumphant, or Nature will prevail. Verbruggen, I believe, did not assume his own name, in the playhouse bills, till the secession of Betterton and others, from Drury-lane, in 1695. The author of the Laureat says, that the name of Colley was inserted in the characters of several plays. For this I have searched in vain; the earliest proof of Cibber's appearing in any part is amongst the dramatis personæ of Southern's Sir

Antony Love, acted for the first time in 1691, in which his name is placed to a Servant. That Verbruggen and Cibber did not accord is plainly insinuated by the author of the *Laureat**. It was known that the former would resent an injury, and that the latter's valour was entirely passive. The temper of Verbruggen may be known from a story, which I have been often told by the old comedians as a certain fact, and which found its way into some temporary publication.

Verbruggen, in a dispute with one of King Charles's illegitimate sons, was so far transported, by sudden anger, as to strike him and call him a son of a whore.—The affront was given, it seems, behind the scenes of Drury-lane. Complaint was made of this daring insult on a nobleman; and Verbruggen was told, he must either not act in London, or submit publicly to ask the nobleman's pardon. During the time of his being interdicted acting, he had engaged himself to Betterton's theatre. He consented to ask pardon, on liberty granted to express his submission in his own terms. He came on the stage dressed for the part of Oroonoko; and, after the usual preface, owned that he had called the Duke of St. A. a son of a whore: ‘It is true, and I am sorry for it.’ On saying this, he invited the company present to see him act the part of Oroonoko at the theatre in Lincoln’s-inn fields.

To Cibber's passive valour Lord Chesterfield ironically alludes in a weekly paper called Common-Sense: ‘Of all the comedians, who have appeared on the stage in my memory, no one has taken a kicking with such humour as our excellent laureat.’

laureat.' He is thus characterized in the History of the two Stages : 'He is always repining at the success of others ; and, upon the stage, is always making his fellow-actors uneasy.' Whatever gloss Cibber might put on his conduct, and however, in his Apology, he may extol the equanimity of his own temper, there is too much reason to believe part of this charge to be true. Cibber, however, chose Verbruggen for his Loveless, and certainly from a confidence in his superior abilities, in preference to any other actor.

In 1696, Verbruggen was called upon to an exertion of his talents in tragedy. The part of Oroonoko was assigned him by Southern, by the special advice of William Cavendish, the first Duke of Devonshire. This we are told in the dedication to his grace : he adds, 'that it was Verbruggen's endeavour, in the performance of that part, to merit the duke's recommendation.'—A more exalted character, dignified with the noblest faculties of the mind, is not to be found in the English theatre. The passion of love is nowhere so tenderly or ardently expressed. Cibber meanly drops any mention of the man who first acted this great original part. From Verbruggen's Oroonoko, Tom Elrington, an excellent general player, caught a most noble flame of imitation. In the surprise of Oroonoko, on his unexpectedly meeting with Imoinda, a situation which calls for an actor of the greatest genius, Elrington charmed all who saw his action and heard his expression. I have heard Mr. Macklin speak of Elrington's excellence, in this scene, with rapture.—Barry himself was not always equally happy in this superior lover. Garrick seldom

dom failed ; but he was not equally successful in Oroonoko ; the lustre of his eye was lost in the shade of the black colour ; nor was his voice so finely adapted to the melting and passionate addresses and feelings of the lover as to the more violent emotions of the heart. A farther confirmation of Cibber's unfair representation of Verbruggen's merit was the constant respect paid to him by such capable judges of merit as Congreve and Rowe, who trusted him with some of their most difficult characters. He was the original Bajazet ; and the author of the Laureat thinks that the part has not been equally acted since. It is said, he once boasted that he frightened a bailiff from pursuit of him, by *putting on his Bajazet's look of terror*. Elrington was, in Bajazet, as well as in other tragic characters, a fine copy of Verbruggen. When the managers of Drury-lane gave Bajazet to Elrington, in preference to John Mills, the latter complained to Booth of the disgrace : Booth told him, Elrington would make nine such actors as Mills. When Verbruggen died we have no certain account ; nor can I find his name to any part in a new play later than that of Sullen in the Stratagem, acted originally in 1707. To sum up his character in the words of a late author : ‘ He was, in many parts, an excellent actor. In Cassius, Oroonoko, Ventidius, Chamont, Pierre, Cethagus, (in tragedy,) as well as several in comedy, as the Rover, &c. he was an original ; and had a roughness, and a negligent agreeable wildness, in his manner, action, and mein, which became him well *.

Cibber's next step to fame was his being honoured by Sir John Vanbrugh, with a continuation

* Laureat, p. 58.

tion of his Love's last Shift, in the Relapse, or Virtue in Danger. Of all language in comedy, that of this author is the most natural, and the most easy to learn by rote. The Thalia of Vanbrugh resembles a female who charms by the native beauty of her person, the sprightliness of her air, and simplicity of her dress ; though, at the same time, she exerts her influence to steal into your heart and corrupt it. The style of this writer is more the language of conversation than his friend Congreve's. Dine when you will with the latter, you are sure to feast : to have the choicest fish, pheasant, partridge, venison, turtle, &c. With the other you have delicious fare, it is true, but blended with the plainest dishes : the sirloin is not banished to the side-board, nor will you be at a loss to find a joint of mutton.

The coxcomb-knight, Sir Novelty, in the Fool in Fashion, is, in the Relapse, dignified with a title. Lord Foppington is exalted into a higher degree of folly than the knight ; the author has placed him in more whimsical situations to excite mirth. Cibber's Foppington I have often seen : as the fashions of the times altered, he adjusted his action and behaviour to them, and introduced every species of growing foppery.—Cibber excelled in a variety of comic characters ; but his perfection of action was the coxcomb of quality, and especially his Lord Foppington, in the Careless Husband, which is a very fine draft of a man of good parts stepping beyond the bounds of sense by peculiarity of excess in dress and behaviour.

In Vanbrugh's comedy of *Æsop*, Cibber acted the principal character with that easy gravity which becomes the man who instructs by fable.

In

In pronouncing the fables of Æsop, which more resemble the style of Fontaine than Prior's, which are professedly copied from him, my friend, Mr. John Henderson excels all men. Those, who have heard him read a tale of Prior or Swift, a chapter of *Tristram Shandy*, or any composition of the same species, will justify my opinion of his merit in fully conceiving and uttering the spirit of an author in the most familiar and agreeable manner.

At her first onset, the muse of Vanbrugh was very prolific : in the space of six or seven months she brought forth three comedies ; the last was the *Provoked Wife*. There seems to have reigned in our dramatists of that age a strong desire to throw abuse on the clergy : in this play, which I think is the most perfect of his pieces, he has introduced Sir John Brute drunk in the habit of a clergyman ; his Parson Bull, in the *Relapse*, was another vile representative of the sacred order. Pope was at a loss to guess at Swift's unalterable dislike to Vanbrugh : I think the doubt is easily resolved, from the poet's ridicule of churchmen.

Cibber's Sir John Brute was copied from Betterton, as far as a weak pipe and an inexpressive meagre countenance could bear any resemblance to the vigorous original. I have seen him act this part with great and deserved applause ; his skill was so masterly, that, in spite of natural impediments, he exhibited a faithful picture of this worshipful debauchee. Vanburgh was, I suppose, prevailed upon by Cibber to transfer the abuse on the clergy to a satirical picture of women of fashion, in a scene which Cibber acted with much pleasantry. His comic feeling when drunk, and after receiving the challenge of Constant, when he found

him

him and Heartfree in his wife's closet, was inimitable acting. The audience was so delighted with him, that they renewed their loudest approbation several times.

Quin, for several years, was the Brute of Lincoln's-inn fields and other theatres. He was in general a most valuable performer in comedy. In Sir John Brute, he seemed to have forgotten that he had ever been a gentleman, of which part of the character Cibber and Garrick retained the remembrance through every scene of Brute's riot and debauchery. Quin, besides, in this part, wanted variety, and that glow and warmth, in colouring the extravagances of this merry rake, without which the picture remains imperfect and unfinished.

When Garrick was first announced for Brute, various were the opinions of the play-going people. Quin swore that he might possibly act Master Jacky Brute, but it was impossible he should ever be Sir John Brute. The public almost unanimously set the stamp of approbation on his manner of representing this character upon his first attempt. After he had fully satisfied his fancy, and ripened his judgment by the experience of two or three years, he was pronounced to be as perfect in this as in any of his most approved parts.

Though Cibber's performance in Brute was justly admired, those, who can call to remembrance the different portraits of this riotous debauchee, as exhibited by these two great masters, will, I believe, justify me in giving the preference, on the whole, to Mr. Garrick. The latter had, amongst other advantages, a more expressive countenance, and a much happier tone of voice; his action, too, was more diversified, and his humour less confined.

fined.—In the Bacchanalian scene, with Lord Rake and his gang, from deficiency of power and look, Cibber fell greatly short of Garrick ; here the latter was most triumphantly riotous, and kept the spectators in continual glee. Cibber's pale face, tame features, and weak pipe, did not present so full a contrast to female delicacy, when in woman's apparel, as Garrick's stronger-marked features, manly voice, and more sturdy action. The cap, which he ordered to be made for this scene, was a satirical stroke upon the vast quantity of gauze, ribbon, blond lace, flowers, fruit, herbage, &c. with which the ladies, about eight years since, used to adorn their heads. After enlarging so much on the great perfection of acting which Cibber displayed in the closet-scene, where Constant and Heartfree are discovered, I cannot there give the preference to Garrick, though of all the actors of drunken-scenes he was allowed to be the most natural and diverting ; but impartiality requires me here to give the palm to Cibber.

In 1699, Cibber was unhappily seized with a passion for writing tragedy.—This brought forth his *Xerxes*; but the patentees and actors of Drury-lane rejected his tragic brat so absolutely, that he was reduced to the necessity of applying to the company of Lincoln's-inn fields.

Betterton consented to act this tragedy, on condition the author would pledge his credit to pay all incidental expences, in case of non-success.* The action of Betterton and Mrs. Barry could not prevent the entire damnation of *Xerxes*.

Soon

* Life of *Æsopus*, annexed to the *Laureat*.

Soon after, the author employed his talents more happily in writing the Careless Husband.—The success of this comedy raised him, very deservedly, to a high rank amongst our dramatic writers. The plot is simple : the reforming a gay, thoughtless, libertine, into the kind and generous husband, by opening, in their full lustre, the amiable conduct of a patient and neglected wife ; to the main plot was added, in an episode, a well-concerted scheme of pretended love, to reduce, by jealousy, a lovely coquet to the frank acknowledgment of a real passion for a worthy and constant lover. The dialogue of the play is easy and natural, properly elevated to the rank of the personæ dramatis. The acts seem to be made up of nothing but chit-chat, though the characters are well discriminated and the plot regularly proceeds. Cibber was fond of scenes of reconciliation : in three or four of his comedies*, he has wrought them up with incidents so natural and interesting, and in a style so truly affecting, that they afford perpetual source of pleasure to an audience. So well did Cibber, though a professed libertine through life, understand the dignity of virtue, that no comic author has drawn more delightful and striking pictures of it. Mrs. Porter, upon reading a part, in which Cibber had painted virtue in the strongest and most lively colours, asked him how it came to pass, that a man, who could draw such admirable portraits of goodness, should yet live as if he were a stranger to it ?—‘ Madam,’ said Colley, ‘ the one is absolutely necessary, the other is not.’

The

* Love's last Shift, Careless Husband, Wife's Resentment, Provoked Husband.

The first shining proof of Mrs. Oldfield's merit was produced in the *Careless Husband*; little known before, she was barely suffered. Her Lady Betty Modish at once discovered accomplishments to which the public were strangers.

Mrs. Oldfield was, in person, tall, genteel, and well shaped; her countenance pleasing and expressive, enlivened with large speaking eyes, which, in some particular comic situations, she kept half shut, especially when she intended to give effect to some brilliant or gay thought. In sprightliness of air, and elegance of manner, she excelled all actresses; and was greatly superior in the clear, sonorous, and harmonious tones of her voice.

By being a welcome and constant visitor to families of distinction, Mrs. Oldfield acquired an elegant and graceful deportment in representing women of high rank. She expressed the sentiments of Lady Betty Modish and Lady Townly in a manner so easy, natural, and flowing, and so like to her common conversation, that they appeared to be her own genuine conception. She was introduced to Christopher Rich by Sir John Vanbrugh. She lived successively the friend and mistress of Arthur Manwaring, Esq; one of the most accomplished men of his age, and General Churchill.—She had a son by each of these gentlemen.—Notwithstanding these connections were publicly known, she was invited to the houses of women of fashion, as much distinguished for unblemished character as elevated rank. The royal family did not disdain to see Mrs. Oldfield at their levees. George II. and Queen Caroline, when Prince and Princess of Wales, often condescended to converse with her. One day, the princess told

Mrs. Oldfield, she had heard that Gen. Churchill and she were married.—‘ So it is said, may it please your highness, but we have not owned it yet.’

Mrs. Oldfield, from mere motives of compassion, bestowed a yearly pension of 50l. on the unfortunate Savage, which he enjoyed to her death. Dr. Johnson seems to approve Savage’s not celebrating the memory of his benefactress in a poem. But, surely, he might have written verses on his patroness without offence to decency or morality. Mrs. Oldfield was generous and humane, witty, well bred, and universally admired and beloved. In variety of professional merit, she excelled all the actresses of her time. These are topics Mr. Savage might have insisted upon without wounding his piety.

Pope, who seems to have persecuted the name of player with a malignancy unworthy of genius, in his Art of Sinking in Poetry, stigmatized her conversation by the word *Oldfieldismos*, which he printed in Greek characters. There cannot be a doubt that he meant Mrs. Oldfield by the dying coquet, in his Epistle on the Characters of Men :

Odious! in woollen! 'twould a saint provoke!—
Were the last words which poor Narcissa spoke.—
No! let a charming chintz and Brussels lace
Wrap my cold limbs and shade my lifeless face.
One would not, sure, be frightful when one's dead;
And, Betty, give this cheek a little red.

The Betty here mentioned is supposed to have been Mrs. Saunders, Mrs. Oldfield’s friend and confidante, a very good actress in parts of decayed widows, nurses, and old maids. She retired from the stage in 1725; and played, about nine years

years after, the part of Lady Wishfor't, in the Way of the World, for the benefit of Mrs. Younger, soon after, by marriage, the honourable Mrs. Finch. Mrs. Oldfield had, for a long time, conceived a dislike to acting parts in tragedy; but the constant applause, which followed her tragic representation, reconciled her to Melpomene. Her last new part, in tragedy, was Thomson's Sophonisba. The author bestows, in his short advertisement to the play, a very high encomium on her action and deportment in that noble character. In reply to some degrading expression of Massinissa, relating to Carthage, she uttered the following line,

Not one base word of Carthage, for thy soul! —

with such grandeur in her action, a look so tremendous, and in a voice so powerful, that it is said she even astonished Wilks, her Massinissa; it is certain the audience were struck, and expressed their feelings by the most uncommon applause. To gain a more complete knowledge of this actress's distinguished faculties of pleasing, the reader must peruse the latter end of Cibber's preface to his Provoked Husband. In all the tumults and disturbances of the theatre on the first night of a new play, which was formerly a time of more dangerous service, to the actors, than it has been of late, Mrs. Oldfield was entirely mistress of herself; she thought it her duty, amidst the most violent opposition and uproar, to exert the utmost of her abilities to serve the author. In the comedy of the Provoked Husband, Cibber's enemies tried all their power to get the play condemned. The reconciliation-scene wrought so effectually upon

upon the sensible and generous part of the audience, that the conclusion was greatly and generously approved. Amidst a thousand applause, Mrs. Oldfield came forward to speak the epilogue; but when she had pronounced the first line,—

Methinks I hear some powder'd critic say—

a man, of no distinguished appearance, from the seat next to the orchestra, saluted her with a hiss. She fixed her eye upon him immediately, made a very short pause, and spoke the words *poor creature!* loud enough to be heard by the audience, with such a look of mingled scorn, pity, and contempt, that the most uncommon applause justified her conduct in this particular, and the poor reptile sunk down with fear and trembling.

Lady Townly has been universally said to be her *ne plus ultra* in acting. She滑id so gracefully into the foibles, and displayed so humorously the excesses of a fine woman, too sensible of her charms, too confident of her power, and led away by her passion for pleasure, that no succeeding Lady Townly arrived at her many distinguished excellences in that character. Mrs. Heron, her successor, and the beautiful Mrs. Wofington, came nearest to her.

Cibber has, in his preface to this play, very justly commended Wilks for his manly assumed spirit in Lord Townly.—Wilks was so much the real fine gentleman, that, in the scene where he was reduced to the necessity of reproaching Lady Townly with her faults, in his warrnest anger he mixed such tenderness as was softened into

into tears. The part has not been equally supported by any actor since.

Mr. Garrick, in Lord Townly, seemed ever to be under restraint. He kept back his natural impetuosity so much, that he lost the spirit of the Provoked Husband.

During the embrace of reconciliation, in speaking these words,—‘ But from a shipwreck saved, we mingle tears with our embraces,’—Barry, in happily mixing the various passions which arise in the breast of a good man and reconciled husband, exceeded all conception.

Sir Francis Wronghead has been well acted by several comedians, and especially by Macklin and Yates; that they did not reach the finish of the author may be excused.

Cibber had two passions, which constantly exposed him to severe censure, and sometimes the highest ridicule: his writing tragedy and acting tragic characters. In both he persisted to the last: for, after he had left the stage many years, he acted Richard III. and very late in life produced his Papal Tyranny. Of his Cardinal Wolsey I have spoken largely in my remarks on Henry VIII. Iago he acted in a style so drawling and hypocritical, and wore the mask of honesty so loosely, that Othello who is not drawn a fool, must have seen the villain through his thin disguises. The truth is, Cibber was endured, in this and other tragic parts on account of his general merit in comedy. During this century, the public had not seen a proper outline of Iago till Charles Macklin exhibited a faithful picture of this arch-villain, 1744, in the Haymarket-theatre, when Foote was his Othello. It is to Macklin we chiefly owe the many admirable

ble strokes of passion with which Barry surprised us in Othello. Let not this be understood to mean the least degradation of that great actor's abilities; for, if Barry had not possessed a soul capable of receiving the instructions of so great a master, he could not have so pathetically affected an audience. Macklin himself will honestly tell us, that he owed no small part of his knowledge in acting to the lessons he gained from Mr. Chetwood, prompter of Drury-lane theatre.

Cibber persisted so obstinately in acting parts in tragedy, that at last the public grew out of patience, and fairly hissed him off the stage. The following anecdote was many years since authenticated to me.

When Thomson's Sophonisba was read to the actors, Cibber laid his hand upon Scipio, a character, which, though it appears only in the last act, is of great dignity and importance. For two nights successively, Cibber was as much exploded as any bad actor could be. Williams, by desire of Wilks, made himself master of the part; but he, marching slowly, in great military distinction, from the upper part of the stage, and wearing the same dress as Cibber, was mistaken for him, and met with repeated hisses joined to the music of catcalls; but, as soon as the audience were undeceived, they converted their groans and hisses to loud and long-continued applause.

To aim at general excellence is highly commendable; but to persist in opposition to the repeated reproofs of the public, is bidding defiance to the general sense.

As a manager, to whom was entrusted the inspection of new plays, operas, and farces, and of receiving the applications of all dramatic writers, Cibber's

Cibber's character does not appear very justifiable. In the Memoirs of Mr. Garrick, I related the story of his insolent behaviour to Mr. Fenton, the author of *Mariamne*, who perhaps fared the worse with him from his being known to be the intimate friend of Mr. Pope. Various complaints were continually circulated, in the prints, of his pride and impertinence to authors, especially to the youngest of them, whom he termed *singing-birds*, which he was fond of choking. His callous temper rendered all attacks from the press ineffectual. One story of his unrestrained insolence is worth relating, because it seems, for once, he was mortified with the chastisement which attended his behaviour.

A certain young gentleman applied to Cibber to look over a new dramatic piece. He knocked at his door, and gave into his hands a roll of paper, as he stood on the threshold, the door being but half opened ; he desired he would read it, and give him his opinion of it. Cibber turned over the first leaf ; and, reading only two lines, returned it with these words, ‘ Sir, it will not do.’ The mortified author left him ; and Cibber, full of the adventure, went to Buiton’s coffee-house, and, ready to split with laughter, related the story to Colonel Brett ; but he, far from applauding such conduct, put on a severe brow, and treated him with very sharp language. He told him, if the gentleman had resented this vile usage in any manner, he would have been justified.—‘ Do you pretend, sir, by reading two lines, and that in a ridiculous cursory manner, to judge of the merit of a whole play ? ’—Much more, to the same purpose, the colonel added, and, when he had done, left the room. Cibber made no reply : he squinted,

as usual ; took a pinch of snuff ; and sat down to ruminate on the affair, under the pretence of reading a *Spectator*.*

But Cibber was not only accused of treating authors with superciliousness, but with purloining from works which were left in his hands, and which he detained in order to make advantage of them. The author of the *Laureat* particularly mentions his discouraging a lady who brought him a play, in which a gallant gentleman courts two women at once : this he called an incident entirely improbable. The same author accuses him of afterwards engraving this very character in one of his own comedies, under the name of Atall.† At this distance of time, the evidence of Cibber's thefts, if any such were committed by him, being removed, nothing positive can be pronounced concerning them.

The author of the *Laureat*'s description, in what manner this manager and his brothers treated authors, will give a strong picture of overbearing insolence on one side, and of tame submission on the other.

‘The court sitting,’ says this writer, ‘Chancellor Cibber, (for the other two, like masters in chancery, sat only for form-sake, did not presume to judge) nodded to the author to open his manuscript. The author begins to read ; in which if he failed to please the corrector, he would sometimes condescend to read it for him. If the play struck him very warmly, as it would if he found any thing new in it, and he thought he could par-

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ticularly

* *Laureat*, p. 67.

† *Ibidem.*]

ticularly shine as an actor, he would then lay down his pipe, (for the chancellor always smoked when he made a decree,) and cry, “ By G——, there is something in this! I do not know but it may do ; I will play such a part.” When the reading was finished, he made his proper corrections, and sometimes without any propriety.*

That Wilks, who was without a learned education, though a man of plain good sense, should submit to the supreme direction of Cibber, respecting new pieces, is not surprising ; but that Booth, a scholar, and a better judge, of tragedy at least, than Cibber, should resign his understanding to an inferior, must be resolved into the great love of ease which accompanied him through life. Of Booth’s conduct, as a manager, we have not the least or most distant hint of complaint in Cibber’s Apology, but the author is extremely querulous with respect to Dogget’s and Wilks’s behaviour. The former was certainly, in the opinion of the world as well as Cibber, an original and inimitable actor ; a close copier of nature in all her attitudes and disguises ; a man, so sensible of what his own natural abilities could possibly attain to, that he never ventured upon any part that he was not sure he could properly represent. Of this integrity to himself Cibber produces a remarkable instance. On his return to Drury-lane, in 1697, Vanbrugh cast him into the part of Lory, in the Relapse : after a trial, in which he found his deficiency, he gave it up to Pinkethman. Cibber says, in dressing a character to the greatest exactness, Dogget was remarkably skilful ; the least article, of whatever habit he wore, seemed, in some degree, to speak and mark

the

* Laureat, p. 67.

the different humour he represented. This, says the writer of a General View of the Stage *, I have heard from one who performed with Dogget; and that he could, with great exactness, paint his face so as to represent the age of seventy, eighty, and ninety, distinctly; which occasioned Sir Godfrey Kneller to tell him one day, at Button's, that he excelled him in painting; for that he could only copy nature from the originals before him, but that Dogget could vary them at pleasure, and yet keep a close likeness. In the part of Moneytrap, in the Confederacy, he wore an old threadbare black coat, to which he had put new cuffs, pocket-lids, and buttons, on purpose to make its rustiness more conspicuous; the neck was stuffed so as to make him appear round-shouldered and give his head the greater prominence; his square-toed shoes were large enough to buckle over those he wore in common, which made his legs appear much smaller than usual.—This great actor was perhaps the only one who confined himself to such characters as nature seemed to have made him for. No temptation could allure him to step out of his own circle; from this circumstance, he never appeared to the audience with any diminution of his general excellence. In his temper, he was as true a humourist as Morose in the Silent Woman.—Liberty he liked, for he was a staunch whig, but not on the generous principles established at the Revolution; his love of freedom extended little farther than the gratification of his own inclinations. Money he loved; but even that he would reject, if his own method of obtaining it was by any means disturbed; witness his resigning a large

N 2

income,

* Written by Mr. T. Wilks, and published for J. Coote, in 1759.

income, because the crown, through the interest of Lord Bolingbroke, interfered in favour of Booth. Dogget never interposed, in the management of the theatre, except to adjust his own parts in plays, and to take his share of the profits at the treasury. No stock-broker was busier at the Exchange, to take advantage of the rise and fall of stocks, than Dogget. Cibber was as intent upon gaming, and all manner of pleasure, as Dogget could be in trafficking with the funds. Cibber has lost every shilling at hazard or cards, and has been heard to cry out, ‘Now I must go home and eat a child !’ This attention to the gaming-table would not, we may be assured, render him fitter for his business of the stage. After many an unlucky run, at Tom’s coffee-house *, he has arrived at the playhouse in great tranquillity, and then, humming over an opera-tune, he has walked on the stage very imperfect in the part he was to act. Cibber should not have reprehended Powell so severely for neglect and imperfect representation : I have seen him at fault where it was least expected, in parts which he had acted a hundred times, and particularly in Sir Courtly Nice ; but Colley dexterously supplied the deficiency of his memory by prolonging his ceremonious bow to the lady, and drawling out ‘Your humble servant, madam,’ to an extraordinary length ; then, taking a pinch of snuff, and strutting deliberately across the stage, he has gravely asked the prompter, What is next ?

Wilks was, by nature and education, differently formed : with the warm and generous spirit which becomes a man, he had, from practice and experience,

* In Russell-street.

rience, under the tuition of Mr. Ashbury, (a very good actor of the Bettertonian school, and many years the manager of Dublin theatre,) acquired a love for order, decency, and strict regularity, in the business of the scene.—It is asserted, by the writer of the Laureat, that, when trusted with the management of the stage by Christopher Rich, he found such confusion, and contempt of all discipline, in the company, that he was reduced to the necessity of challenging and fighting several amongst the ring-leaders of these disorders.— Powell, says Cibber, declined a duel with Wilks, when he found his antagonist would fight. Pity ! that a man, possessed of such great talents for acting as Powell, should have rendered them all ineffectual by his persisting in irregularity and intemperance. In looking over the advertisement of plays, in the first edition of the Spectator, published in 1711 and 1712, the name of Powell I see placed to many very important characters, under the management of Cibber, Dogget, and Wilks: to Falstaff, to Lear, Leon, Cortez, in the Indian Emperor, and many others. Even Wilks would not be so partial, during Powell's ability to act, as to give these important parts to his friend Mills. Addison and Steele continued their regard and countenance, as long as they could be of service to this unhappy man. That he acted Portius, in Cato, 1713, must have been with the author's approbation ; and this, I believe, was Powell's last part, in a new play, of any consequence. He was so hunted, by the sheriffs officers, for debt, that he usually walked the streets with his sword in his hand (sheathed,) in terrorem to his pursuers. If he saw any of them at a distance, he would roar out, ‘ Get on the other

other side of the way, you dog !' and the bailiff, who knew his old customer, would most obligingly answer, ' We do not want you *now*, Master Powell.' He was alive in the year 1717 ; I saw, many years since, a play-bill, for his benefit, dated that year. The unhappy George Powell, whose fault was too great a passion for social pleasure, was certainly an actor of genius ; but, in his moral conduct, he was, amongst the players, what Edmund Smith, the author of *Phædra* and *Hippolitus*, was amongst the poets : not all the care and caution of Smith's Oxford-friends, and his polite acquaintance at London, could keep him either decent in dress or regular in behaviour.

To return to Wilks. What could this man, of sobriety and habitual regularity, do with such partners as a gamester and a hunter after the stocks ? Cibber and Dogget wanted not abilities to go through the various business of the theatre ; but their inclinations carried them to their two dear Dulcineas, pleasure and profit.

Cibber draws an advantageous character of Dogget, as a man of sense and one that understood business ; but, surely, his giving up near 800l. or 1000l. per annum, on another man's being advanced to an equal degree of happiness with himself, or from a paltry grudge or pique to a worthy man who sometimes thwarted his pride, gives no good proof of the soundness of his intellects. The great complaint of Cibber and Dogget, against their partner, Wilks, was his impetuous and overbearing temper. On that account, and that only, Dogget told Cibber, says the latter, he gave up his income ; and, for that cause, the same informed

former assures us, several actors of Drury-lane theatre forsook their old masters, and listed with John Rich at Lincoln's-inn fields. I shall not take the evidence of two such partial and interested men against so honest and steady a character, in the maintenance of every thing that was decent, just, and generous, as that of Robert Wilks. Dogget sacrificed to his own humour when he resigned his share of the licence or patent. When Quin, Walker, and Ryan, left Drury-lane theatre, it was not from a dislike to Wilks, but from an offer of advanced salary, with the possession of the capital parts. Ryan chose 5l. per week, at Lincoln's-inn fields, with the part of Hamlet, in preference to Laertes, in the same play, and 50s. at Drury-lane ; and Quin preferred the acceptance of the same, or a larger, salary, offered from Rich, with Tamerlane and Brutus in Julius Cæsar, instead of inferior parts in the same plays with what he thought a small pittance. The mean subterfuge of Cibber, to cloke his spleen to Wilks by the suffrage of others, is visible. But this good man gave Dogget and Cibber still farther provocations. In the decorations of plays, they grudged, from mean œconomy, every necessary expence, while his spirit took pleasure in dressing every character as it ought to be, and furnishing such other theoretic ornaments as the dramatic piece required.

Of the managers, Booth, Wilks, and Cibber, the last, for many reasons, was the least esteemed by the players. He spared no pains, it is true, to instruct the actors in such characters as he drew in his own pieces ; but he could not forbear, at times, wantonly throwing out sarcasms on the inferior

inferior performers *. Cibber was certainly least esteemed of the three great masters ; the Laureat goes farther, and avers that he was absolutely odious to the comedians. I will not go so far ; but I have been told, that the players had no hold on any of his passions, to accomplish their views, except his timidity. Victor informed me, that Bickerstaffe, a comedian, whose benefit-play Steele good-naturedly recommends to the public, in the Tatler, on account of his being, as he says, his relation, had acquired an income of 4l. per week. Cibber, in an œconomical fit, retrenched him of half. The man, who had a family, was struck at the sudden diminution of his allowance ; and, knowing whence his misfortune was derived, waited on Cibber, and flatly told him, that, as he could not subsist on the small sum to which he had reduced his salary, he must call the author of his distress to an account, for that it would be easier to him to lose his life than to starve. The affrighted Cibber told him, he should receive an answer from him on Saturday next. Bickerstaffe found, that day, his usual income was continued.

However Cibber might be disliked by the players, it is certain that Wilks was esteemed and respected by them. Booth was valued and beloved as their companion, who mixed in their society and took part in their interests. When Harper remon-

* When the younger Mills was once rehearsing Scandal, in Love for Love, a part which Booth had formerly acted, Mills, in that part of the play where Scandal breaks out into the exclamation of ‘ Death and hell ! where is Valentine ? ’ observed, that poor Mr. Booth forgot the ‘ Death and hell, &c.’ Cibber, with a contemptuous smile, told him, there was more beauty in his forgetfulness than in all he remembered.

remonstrated to him, that Shepherd's income was larger than his by 20s. per week, though he presumed, he said, that his own industry and variety of business were not inferior to Shepherd's; Booth said in reply, assenting to the truth of what he had affirmed, 'Suppose, now, Harper, we should make you both equal by reducing his salary to yours?'—'By no means,' said the other; 'I would not injure Mr. Shepherd for the world; I would only, by your favour, sir, honestly serve myself.'—The manager said no more; on pay-day, Harper found his weekly allowance increased by an addition of twenty shillings. However trifling these little stories may seem, they throw more light on a distinguished character than matters of seemingly more importance. The truth is, the love and esteem of the actors went along with Booth and Wilks; to Cibber they paid no farther regard than what his power and their fear inspired.

There is a little open room, in Drury-lane theatre, called the settle; it is separated from the stage and the scene-room by a wainscot inclosure. It was formerly, before the great green room was built, a place for many of the actors to retire to, between the acts, during the time of action and rehearsal. From time out of mind, till about the year 1740, to this place a pretty large number of the comedians used to resort constantly after dinner, which, at that time, was generally over at two o'clock. Here they talked over the news and politics of the day, though, indeed, they were no great politicians; for players are generally king's men. Here they cracked their jokes, indulged in little sallies of pleasantry, and laughed, in good humour, at their mutual follies and adventures.—Kings, footmen, aldermen, cardinals, coblers,

princes, judges, link-boys, and fine gentlemen, in short all characters, were mingled together; and, from this chaos of confusion, arose a harmony of mirth, which contributed not a little to reconcile them to their various situations in the theatre.— Wilks came amongst them sometimes; Booth, who loved the bagatelle, oftener: he liked to converse with them freely, and hear their jokes and remarks on each other; and if, from any accidental story or information, these good men, I mean Wilks and Booth, could make any individual happy, they laid hold of the offered opportunity. Cibber seldom came among the *settlers*; tyrants fear, as they know they are feared.

Cibber, with propriety enough, perhaps, confines his narrative to those actors who were dead. But how came he to forget Dicky Norris and Bullock, men of acknowledged merit, who had been numbered with the dead several years before he published his Apology? Norris was so much a favourite of the public, ever since he had acted the part of Jubilee Dicky, in the Trip to the Jubilee, that the name of Dicky was often annexed, in the play-house bills, to any character he acted. In the first edition of the Spectator, in the advertisement of the Beaux Stratagem, he is called Dicky Scrub. He was, in size, low and little, but not ill made, with an expressive, truly-comic countenance, and a shrill, clear, and audible, voice. Mrs. Oldfield thought him an excellent figure for a cuckold. When, upon the indisposition of Norris, Cibber undertook to play Barnaby Brittle, in the Wanton Wife, his action was generally applauded; but when Cibber said to Oldfield, ‘Nanny, how do you like your new husband?’ she replied, ‘Why, very well, but not

not half so well as Dicky Norris?'—‘How so?’—‘Why, you are too important in your figure for one of the horned race; but Norris has such a diminutive form, and so sneaking a look, that he seems formed on purpose for horns, and I make him a cuckold always with a hearty good will*?’

In his last illness, he was attended by an eminent physician, who gave him hopes of recovery. ‘Doctor,’ said the sick man, ‘when the wheels of a watch are quite decayed, do you think they can be repaired?’—‘No, by no art in the world.’—‘Then, sir,’ says Norris, ‘it is the same case with me; all the wheels of my machine are absolutely, through time, quite worn out, and nothing can restore them to their accustomed force.’—Norris died about the year 1725.

Bullock was an actor of great glee and much comic vivacity. He was, in his person, large; with a lively countenance, full of humorous information. Steele, in the Tatler, speaks, with his usual kind sensibility, of Norris, Bullock, and Pinkethman, and their powers of raising mirth.—The historian of the two stages says, that Bullock ‘is not only the best of actors, but so modest, that he is insensible of his own merit.’ The comic ability of Bullock was confirmed to me by Mr. Macklin, who assured me, very lately, that he was, in his department, a true genius of the stage. I have seen him act several parts with great applause; especially the Spanish Friar, at a time when he was above eighty.

Cibber, agreeably to his adopted plan of confining his narrative to deceased actors, spoke only

in

* Chetwood, &c.

in general terms of Mrs. Porter's merit in tragedy ; but, although this volume is enlarged to a much greater bulk than I intended, I cannot omit some well-authenticated anecdotes relating to this most valuable and respected actress ; who was not only an ornament of the stage, but of human nature.

She was first taken notice of by Betterton ; who saw her act, when a child, the Genius of Britain, in a Lord Mayor's Pageant, in the reign of Charles or James II. Mrs. Porter always spoke of Betterton with great respect and veneration.— She was so little, when first under his tuition, that he threatened her, if she did not speak and act as he would have her, to put her into a fruit-woman's basket and cover her with a vine-leaf. It was the custom of the fruit-women, formerly, to stand fronting the pit, with their backs to the stage ; and their oranges, and other fruit, covered with vine-leaves.

Mrs. Porter was ever welcome to the best and most respectable families in London. Oldfield and this actress rose gradually to excellence and fame much about the same time. They conversed together on the best terms ; Porter's gravity was a contrast to the sprightliness of Oldfield, who would often, in jest, call her her mother.

She lived at Heywood-hill, near Hendon. After the play, she went home in a one-horse chaise ; her constant companions were a book and a brace of horse-pistols. The dislocation of her thigh-bone was attended with a circumstance that deserves to be recorded. In the summer of 1731, as she was taking the air in her one-horse chaise, she was stopped by a highwayman, who demanded her money. She had the courage to present one

of her pistols to him ; the man, who perhaps had only with him the appearance of fire-arms, assured her that he was no common thief ; that robbing on the highway was not to him a matter of choice, but necessity, and in order to relieve the wants of his poor distressed family. He informed her, at the same time, where he lived ; and told her such a melancholy story, that she gave him all the money in her purse, which was about ten guineas. The man left her : upon this she gave a lash to the horse ; he suddenly started out of the track, and the chaise was overthrown ; this occasioned the dislocation of her thigh-bone. Let it be remembered, to her honour, that notwithstanding this unlucky and painful accident, she made strict enquiry after the robber ; and, finding that he had not deceived her, she raised, amongst her acquaintance, about sixty pounds, which she took care to send him. Such an action, in a person of high rank, would have been celebrated as something great and heroic : the feeling mind will make no distinction between the generosity of an actress and that of a princess.

I have already observed, that she was esteemed the genuine successor of Mrs. Barry, whose theatrical page she had been when very young.

When the scene was not agitated with passion, to the general spectator she did not give equal pleasure ; her recitation of fact or sentiment was so modulated, as to resemble musical cadence rather than speaking, and this rendered her acting in comedy somewhat cold and ineffectual. — Where the passions predominated, she exerted her powers to a supreme degree ; she seemed then to be another person, and to be informed with that noble

noble and enthusiastic ardour which was capable of rousing the coldest auditor to an equal animation. Her deportment was dignified with graceful ease, and her action the result of the passion she felt.

After the misfortune of her dislocated limb, and in a very advanced age, I saw her act many of her principal characters with much vigour and great applause, and, in particular, Clytemnestra in Thomson's *Agamemnon**. In drawing this character, the author has varied from the idea of Æschylus ; and, I think with great propriety, he has followed the original drawing of Homer, who gives some strokes of tenderness to this princess, and makes her yield with reluctance to the persuasions of Ægisthus ; who could not entirely subdue her affection to her husband, till he had removed the faithful bard, placed about her by Agamemnon as her counsellor and adviser.

In this tragedy, Mrs. Porter gave a striking proof of her great power in expressing the passions.—Her action and deportment, through the part of Clytemnestra, marked the consummate actress. In the second act, when, in the distress of her mind from conscious guilt, she is torn with conflicting passions at the approach of her injured husband, her action and expression, when she said to her attendant —

Bring me my children hither ; they may perhaps relieve
me —

she

* Thomson, in reading his play of *Agamemnon* to the actors, in the green-room, pronounced every line in such a broad Scotch accent, that they could not restrain themselves from a loud laugh. Upon this, the author good-naturedly said to the manager, ‘ Do you, sir, take my play, and go on with it; for, though I can write a tragedy, I find I cannot read one.’

she struck the audience with astonishment, who expressed the highest approbation by loud and reiterated applauses.

In her person she was tall and well-shaped ; of a fair complexion, but not handsome ; her voice was harsh and unpleasing. She elevated herself above all personal defects by her exquisite judgment. Though she greatly admired Betterton, and had seen all the old actors of merit, she was much charmed with Mr. Garrick, and lamented her want of youth and vigour to exert her skill with so great a genius.

Mrs. Porter outlived her annuity ; and, in a very advanced age, was principally supported by a very worthy nobleman *, who made her a present of a new comedy, and permitted her to publish it, for her benefit, by subscription. She died about the year 1762. When Dr. Johnson, some years before her death, paid her a visit, she appeared to him so wrinkled, that, he said, a picture of old age in the abstract might be taken from her countenance. Mrs. Porter lived for some time with Mrs. Cotterell, relict of Colonel Cotterell, and Mrs. Lewis, who, I believe, now resides in the Circus at Bath *.

To return to Cibber. Envy is, I fear, annexed so closely to mankind in general, and more especially to the condition of a player, from his circumscribed situation, that we are not to wonder

* Lord Cornbury.

† The anecdotes, relating to Mrs. Porter, were communicated to me by an elderly gentlewoman, lately dead, an acquaintance of Dr. Johnson, who often visited her ; by one, who was a frequenter of the theatres for near sixty years ; and others,

der that he had his share of it.—He never heartily joined the public voice in the approbation of Mr. Garrick ; he shrank from it as if he was hurt by it.

Mr. Garrick asked him if he had not, in his possession, a comedy or two of his own writing.—‘ What then ?’ said Cibber.—‘ I should be glad to have the honour of bringing it into the world.’ —‘ Who have you to act it ?’ —‘ Why, there are (said Garrick) Clive and Pritchard, myself, and some others,’ whom he named.—‘ No !’ said the old man, taking a pinch of snuff with great nonchalance, ‘ it won’t do.’ —Foote often declared, that Cibber would allow no higher merit to Garrick than his acting Fribble. At a meeting of Cibber, Garrick, Foote, and others, at Sir F. Blake Delaval’s, Garrick imprudently drew on himself a rebuke from Cibber. The conversation happened to turn upon old actors, and their peculiar manner of playing. Mr. Garrick observed, that the old style in acting was banished the stage, and would not now go down. —‘ How do you know ?’ said Cibber ; ‘ you never tried it.’

He either did not see, or would not acknowledge he saw, the merit of Elrington, an actor approved by the best judges in England and Ireland. Elrington, when a young man, wished to act the part of Torrismond, in the Spanish Friar ; this request Cibber opposed with all his might. A nobleman of great eminence sent for him, and desired he would give his reasons for not permitting the young player to try his abilities in a favourite part. ‘ My lord,’ said Cibber, ‘ it is not with us as with you ; your lordship is sensible, that there is no difficulty in filling places at court ;

court ; you cannot be at a loss for persons to act their parts there. But I assure you it is quite otherwise in our theatrical world ; if we should invest people with characters who are incapable to support them we should be undone.'

But Cibber was sufficiently mortified afterwards for his behaviour to Elrington ; who, during the indisposition of Booth, in the year 1729, was the great support of Drury-lane. The managers were so well convinced of his importance to them, that they offered him his own conditions if he would engage with them for a term of years. Elrington, with great modesty, replied : ' I am truly sensible of the value of your offer ; but in Ireland I am so well rewarded for my services, that I cannot think of leaving it on any consideration. — There is not,' added he, ' a gentleman's house in that kingdom to which I am not a welcome visitor.' Elrington died at Dublin, greatly lamented, July 22, 1732.

To conclude. As a writer of comedies, Cibber must be placed in a very superior rank ; before Jeremy Collier attacked the profaneness of dramatic writers, he first taught the stage to talk decently and morally. He was properly the inventor of the higher comedy, a species of the drama in which persons of high birth and eminent rank are introduced ; for the faint efforts, in that style, of Etheridge and Steele, in Sir Fopling Flutter and the Funeral, are scarcely worthy our notice. As a manager of a theatre, his behaviour to authors I have proved to have been illiberal and insolent ; his treatment of the actors has been generally condemned as unfriendly, if not tyrannical. As a member of society at large, little can be said in his praise.—Soon after he had

had sold his share in the patent, for a very large sum, to Mr. Highmore, he applied to the Duke of Grafton for a patent, in favour of his son Theophilus, because Highmore would not comply with the young man's demands. The duke saw through the injustice of the act, and peremptorily refused to gratify the unreasonable request of his old acquaintance, Colley.—Victor, from whom I received my information, very honestly opposed this unjust behaviour of his old friend, Cibber; who, after having parted with his share in the old patent for more than its value, would have rendered it worthless by a new one.

His love of gaming rendered him a neglectful father, and unkind to his family and relations.—The moral honesty of a gamester, depending so much upon the revolutions of chance, cannot safely be relied on.

It must be granted, that, although Cibber was a gamester, he was not ever charged with being a cheat, or gambler. A dupe to his own passions he certainly was, and probably to the fraudulent practices of others; but he never merited the odious nick-name of a black-leg.

His contempt of religion was justly censured by many. Dennis, in a letter to Sir John Edgar, alias Sir Richard Steele, charges him with spitting at a picture of our Saviour at Bath. At Tunbridge, I have been informed by Dr. Johnson, Cibber entered into a conversation with the famous Mr. William Whiston, with a view to insult him; but Whiston cut him short, by telling him, at once, that he could possibly hold no discourse with him; for that he was himself a clergyman; and Cibber was a player, and was besides, as he had heard, a pimp.

Cibber must have raised considerable contributions on the public by his works. To say nothing of the sums accumulated by dedications,* benefits, and the sale of his plays singly, his dramatic works, in quarto, by subscription, published 1721, produced him a considerable sum of money. It is computed that he gained, by the excellent *Apology* for his life, no less than the sum of 1500*l.*

Pope's merciless treatment of Cibber was originally owing to the latter's attack, upon the farce of *Three Hours after Marriage*, in the character of Bayes in the Rehearsal; and, though it is evident Pope severely felt the ridicule of the narrative in Cibber's First Epistle, the reader of his Second Letter will be convinced, that the laureat, notwithstanding his affectation of indifference did not relish the being transmitted to posterity with Pope's indelible marks of infamy upon him.

Though the superior spirit of Swift controuled the actions and regulated the politics of Pope, the latter had no influence of that kind upon the dean. He was not induced, by his friend's dislike to Cibber, to attack him in any part of his writings, except, I believe, in a short ridicule on his birthday odes. As soon as Cibber's *Apology* reached Dublin, Faulkner, the Printer, sent it to the Dean of St. Patrick's, who told him, next day, that Cibber's book had captivated him; he sat up all night to read it through. When Faulkner gave information of this to Cibber, he shed tears for joy.

Cibber died in the eighty-seventh year of his age, 1758. The money he had saved, in the latter part of his life, he left, with great propriety,

to

* King George I. gave him a hundred pounds for his dedication of the *Nonjuror*.

to his grand children.—In person, he was of the middle size ; and, though strait, not well-shaped. I have seen a mezzotinto of him, from a painting of Signor Amiconi, in the character of Lord Foppington, very like him.

I must not forget to relate, that the comedy of the Non-juror, written by Cibber, and acted in 1717, exposed the author to innumerable and virulent attacks from the high tory and Jacobite parties. The generous principles of free government, established at the coronation of King William and Queen Mary, had not, at that time, taken such deep root as they have since done. Many people then survived, who had been attached from education, and some perhaps from principle, to the exiled family. Prejudices imbibed in the early part of life, are not easily subdued ; but, besides those who acted on these motives, there were many who were influenced from meaner inducements. Cibber's play was written with a view to justify the doctrines inculcated by the Revolution, and to open the eyes of the prejudiced in favour of the house of Hanover. The play met with applause and with much success. Cibber artfully transferred the odium of imposture from the nonjuring clergyman to the popish priest.

In spite of his affecting to despise party-men and party principles, Pope in his letters to Jervas and Mr. Digby, discovered no little vexation at the success of the Non-juror ; for that was, with him, a terrible symptom of the decay of poetry.

The play is a good imitation of Moliere's *Tartuffe* ; and deserves commendation, if it were for the sake only of the fine portrait of an amiable young lady. There is not, in all dramatic poetry a more sprightly, good-natured, and generous co-

quet, than Maria ; which is admirably acted by Mrs. Abington, under the name of Charlotte, borrowed from the Nonjuror by Bickerstaffe in his Hypocrite.

Cibber was violently attacked from the prints, chiefly on account of his politics, but pretendedly for his management of the theatre, his behaviour to authors, and for his acting. If we except the remarks on plays and players by the authors of the Tatler and Spectator, the theatrical observations, in those days, were coarse and illiberal, when compared to what we read in our present daily and other periodical papers. The prints of our days are generally conducted by men of education and well acquainted with the polite arts. Nor should the actor think himself above condescending to hearken to their advice and to attend to their reprobation, or suppose himself or his art injured by their free examination of his merits.

Sir Joshua Reynolds, in his excellent notes on Fresnoy, has generously admitted that, if the painter was to be informed of the remarks every spectator would necessarily make on his picture, when exposed to public view, he would gain considerable advantage from them.—This may be applied to acting, *à fortiori*, as every man must be a more adequate judge of stage-representation than of painting. In every nation in Europe, the productions of art are open to examination. In a free country, like ours, the legislators, and the acts of legislature itself, are not exempt from discussion. A poem, a picture, a statue, a piece of music, the action of a player, are all offered to the public eye, and, from their approbation or censure, must stand or fall. The actor, while he continues to be of value, will be an object of criticism. It is, indeed, a test of

of his consequence; and, when that is withdrawn, he will sink to nothing. Parties there will be, and prejudices must exist; but the public is fair in its determination, and will not permit an artist of merit to suffer by unjust remarks or illiberal censures.

Dr. Warburton affected to despise the learning of magazines and reviews. He might, perhaps, receive no addition to his acquirements by perusing them; but the good people of England, I will presume to aver, have been much improved, within these twenty or thirty years, by that variety of literature and science which has been every where disseminated in these vehicles; nor do I think all ranks of people could be more innocently or more profitably employed, than in acquiring knowledge so readily and with such little expence of time and money.

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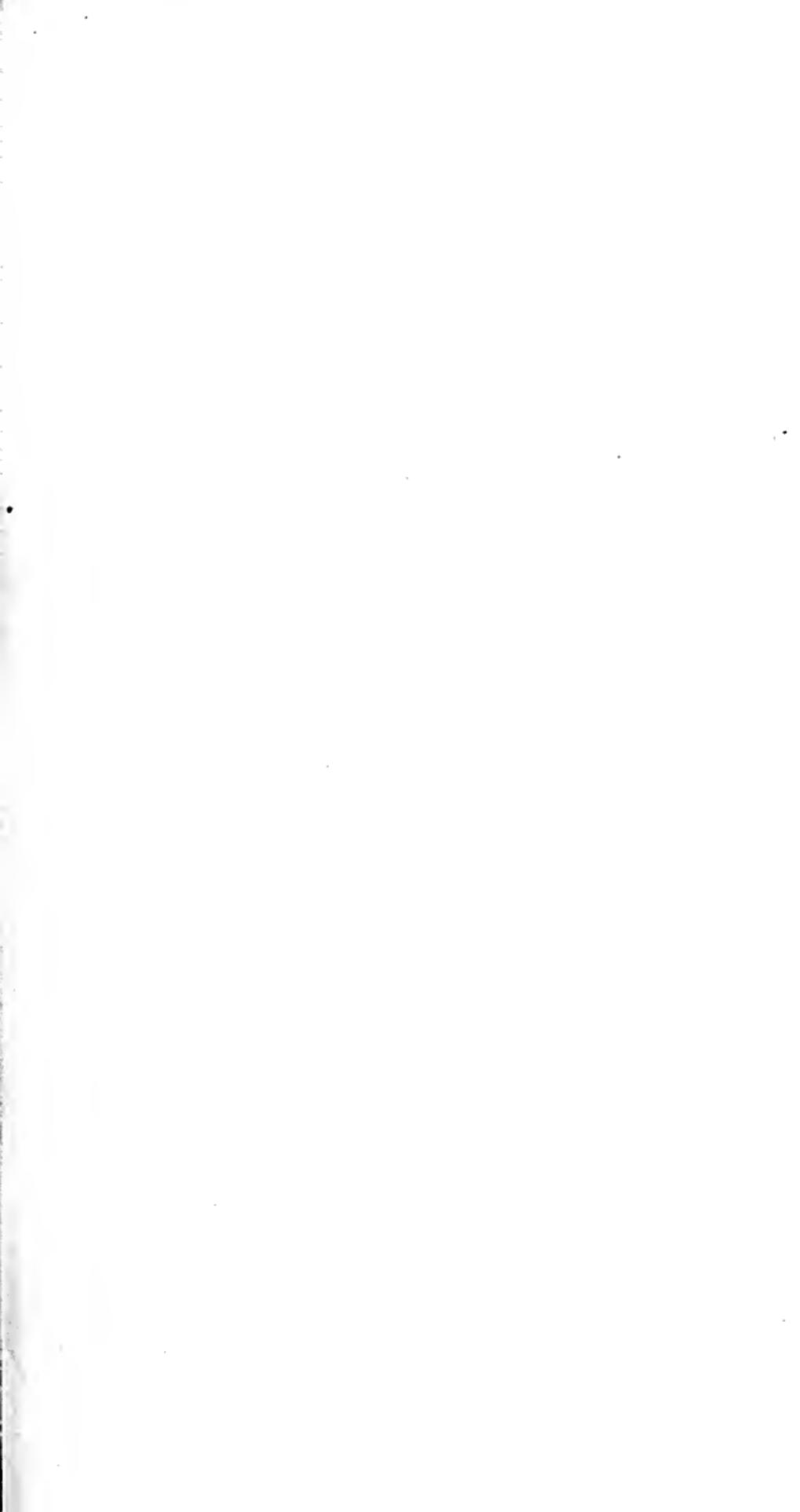
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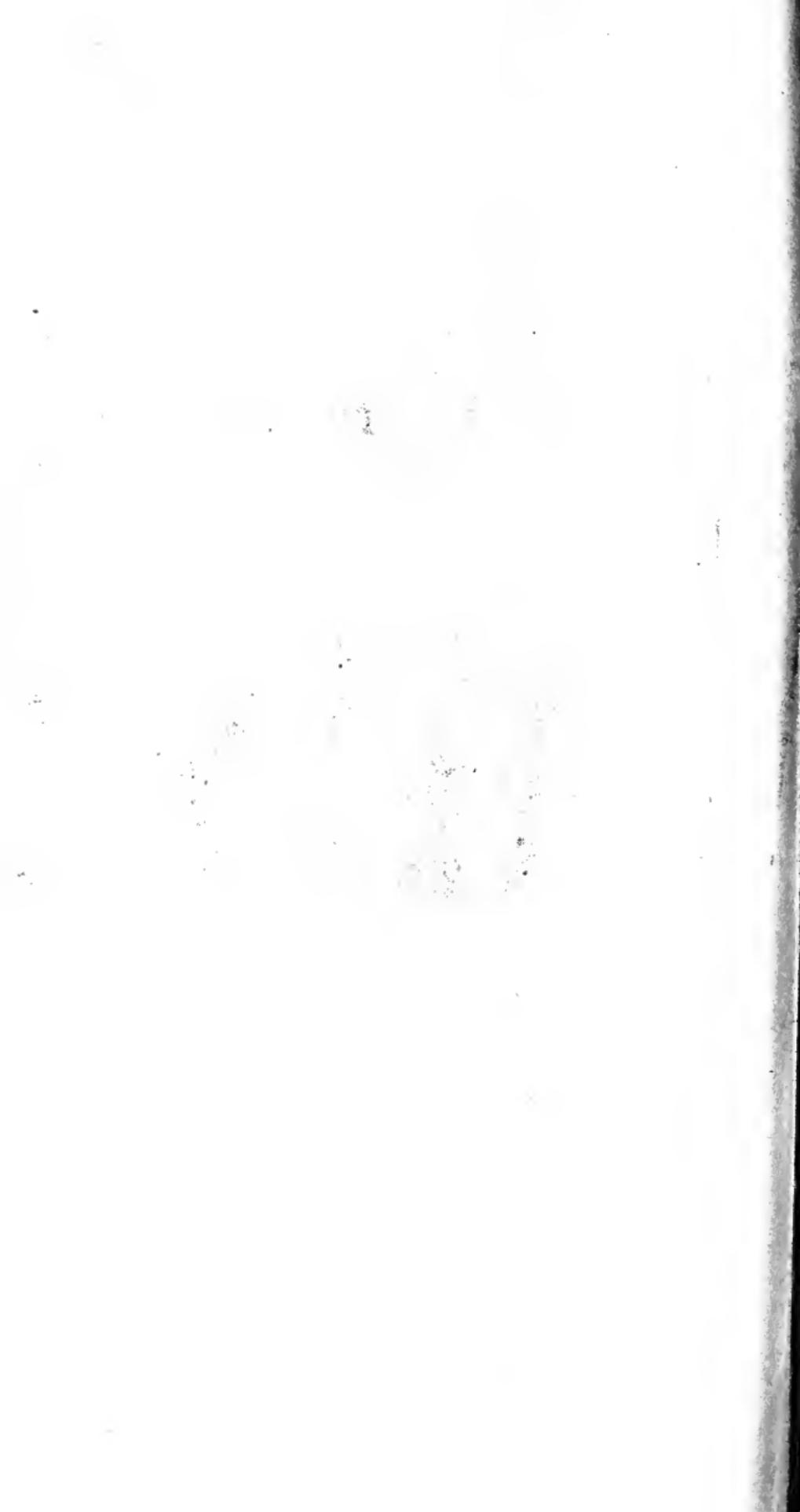
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